

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
FOI/PA  
DELETED PAGE INFORMATION SHEET  
FOI/PA# 1219777-0

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F B I

Date: 11/20/57

Transmit the following in \_\_\_\_\_

(Type in plain text or code)

Via AIRTELAIRMAIL

(Priority or Method of Mailing)

Mr. Tolson
Mr. Boardman
Mr. E. T. Tamm
Mr. Clegg
Mr. Parsons
Mr. Rosen
Mr. Tamm
Mr. Nease
Mr. Clayton
Tele. Room
Mr. Holloman
Miss Gandy

TO: DIRECTOR, FBI (131-363)  
 FROM: SAC, HOUSTON (131-39)  
 RE: SS WILSON B. KEENE  
 SS HIGHFLYER  
 SS GRAND CAMP, etc.  
 ADMIRALTY NOS. 1868, 1869, 1870  
 ADMIRALTY MATTERS

*R. Cooper*

Re: San Antonio airtel to Bureau 11/20/57.

Unless advised to the contrary by the Bureau, the interview of J. D. LATTA will be conducted.

SD  
 Sun Antonio, at Medina, Texas, will interview Mrs. J. D. LATTA as suggested in referenced airtel. Advise her of the nature of the interview; that is, Mr. LATTA's connection and the J. D. Latta Company's connection with the events transpiring prior to and at the time of the Texas City explosion. Will arrange for an interview of J. D. LATTA at a time and place convenient to them and so advise the Houston Office in order that SA DCOLING may conduct the interview.

*A*  
 HAWKINS

3 - Bureau (AM)  
 2 - San Antonio (131-39) (AM)  
 1 - Houston

JJD:ys  
 (6)

RECORDED - 83

56  
 a NOV 23 1957Approved: W. J. 2.00 Sent \_\_\_\_\_ M Per \_\_\_\_\_

55 NOV 27 1957 Special Agent in Charge

F B I

Date: 11/26/57

Transmit the following in PLAIN TEXT  
(Type in plain text or code)Via A I R T E LA I R M A I L

(Priority or Method of Mailing)

Mr. Tolson	.....
Mr. Boardman	.....
Mr. Belmont	.....
Mr. Mohr	.....
Mr. Nease	.....
Mr. Parsons	.....
Mr. Rosen	.....
Mr. Tamm	.....
Mr. Trotter	.....
Mr. Clayton	.....
Tele. Room	.....
Mr. Holloman	.....
Miss Gandy	.....

TO: DIRECTOR, FBI (131-363)  
 FROM: SAC, SAN ANTONIO (131-5)  
 RE: SS WILSON B. KEENE  
 SS HIGHFLYER  
 SS GRAND CAMP, etc.  
 ADMIRALTY NOS. 1868, 1869, 1870  
 ADMIRALTY MATTERS  
 OO - Houston

Re Houston airtel to Bureau 11/20/57.

On 11/25/57, Mrs. J. D. LATTA, Medina, Texas (Telephone LUTHER 9-3795) advised SA JOHN RUSSELL GRAHAM that her husband would be glad to be contacted by SA DOOLING of the Houston Division on any date. She said her husband's condition is not such as would be aggravated by the contact. Mrs. LATTA said her husband does rest in the mornings and she requested that the contact be made anytime after 1:00 p.m. She said the afternoon of 12/2/57, would be satisfactory, but that SA DOOLING should feel free to come on any date thereafter which would be more suitable to him.

It is suggested SA DOOLING arrange to meet Mr. LATTA in Medina, Texas, on the afternoon of 12/2/57 or, if this is not convenient, that the Houston Division advise Mr. LATTA by letter as to the date he will contact him.

- R U C -

END

**AIR TEL** *RECORDED* *131-363-57*

BLAYLOCK

21 NOV 27 1957

6 DEC 3 1957

3 - Bureau (AM)  
 2 - Houston (131-39) (AM)  
 1 - San Antonio

EX-182

JRG:gs

(6)

Approved:

Special Agent in Charge

Sent \_\_\_\_\_ M Per \_\_\_\_\_

RECORDED - 20

SAC, Houston (131-39)

12/2/57

~~NY~~  
~~PAK~~  
Director, FBI (131-363) -

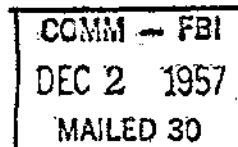
SS WILSON B. KEENE - SS HIGHFLY  
SS GRANDCAMP, etc., Admiralty No  
1868, 1869, 1870  
ADMIRALTY MATTER

Enclosed are two copies of  
memorandum dated 11/27/57, reque  
investigation in this case.  
Assign this matter for  
should be submitte

co  
report

Enclosed - 2

EGP:eem  
(4) 2 11/27/57



Tolson \_\_\_\_\_  
Nichols \_\_\_\_\_  
Boardman \_\_\_\_\_  
Belmont \_\_\_\_\_  
Shr \_\_\_\_\_  
Vons \_\_\_\_\_  
  
Tatum \_\_\_\_\_  
Trotter \_\_\_\_\_  
Nease \_\_\_\_\_  
Tele. Room \_\_\_\_\_  
Holloman \_\_\_\_\_  
Gandy \_\_\_\_\_

68 DEC 10 1957

## FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

REPORTING OFFICE HOUSTON	OFFICE OF ORIGIN HOUSTON	DATE DEC 6 1957	INVESTIGATIVE PERIOD 10/28, 30, 31; 11/4, 5, 7, 8/57
TITLE OF CASE  H1 O SS WILLSON R. KEENE SS HIGHFLYER SS GRANDCAMP, ETC. ADMIRALTY NUMBERS 1868, 1869, 1870		REPORT MADE BY JOSEPH J. DOOLING	TYPED BY md
		CHARACTER OF CASE ADMIRALTY MATTER	

SYNOPSIS: Signed statement obtained from WALTER H. SANDBERG. Captain ROBERT L. WYNNE advised pertinent records Board of Underwriters of New York turned over to FULBRIGHT, CROOKER, FREEMAN, BATES and JAWORSKI. Former employee under J. D. LATTA advised all records other than ledger of J. D. LATTA and COMPANY left as trash when their company went out of business about six years ago. Further that J. D. LATTA resides at Medina, Texas, suffering from dropsy.

- P -

DETAILS: AT HOUSTON, TEXAS:

APPROVED KX	SPECIAL AGENT IN CHARGE	DO NOT WRITE IN SPACES BELOW	
COPIES MADE: ②-Bureau (131-363) 1-USA, Houston 2-Dallas (131-7) 2-Kansas City 3-Houston (131-39)		131-363-59	RECORDED - 7
		20 DEC 10 1957	

On November 4, 1957, WALTER H. SANDBERG was interviewed at his office in the Galveston Wharves Building, Galveston, Texas. The facts he related was reduced to writing, which he signed on November 8, 1957, and is set out below:

"Galveston, Texas  
November 8, 1957

"I, Walter H. Sandberg, make the following free and voluntary statement to James E. Decker and Joseph J. Dooling who have identified themselves to me as Special Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. I realize this statement may be used in a court of law.

"I am the General Manager for the Galveston Wharves. During 1947 I was Vice-President of Texas City Terminal Railway Company.

"Texas City Terminal Railway Company owned the switching lines, docks and wharves in Texas City, Texas. When an ocean bound cargo arrived via railroad in Texas City, this company switched the railroad cars to ship side, unloaded the cars and placed the cargo in a warehouse. The freight rate from the point of origin to Texas City included this unloading and wharfage. This company was reimbursed for these services by the railroad company who transported the cargo to Texas City. However, excessive storage would be billed to the freight forwarder who in turn transferred this cost to the owner of the cargo.

"In early 1946 ammonium nitrate was first shipped through Texas City. I estimate 80,000 tons passed through this port in the first year up to April, 1947.

"the French Supply Council was shipping ammonium nitrate to France in 1947. E. S. Binnings and Company was the agent for the owner of the Grandcamp. J. D. Latta and Company was the freight forwarder for these

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Interview with WALTER H. SANDBERG File # 131-39  
on 11/4/57 at Galveston, Texas

by Special Agent JOSEPH J. DOOLING (Dictated 11/18/57)  
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agency to which loaned. -2-

"ammonium nitrate shipments. Lykes Brothers Steamship Co., Inc. was the operator of the S. S. Highflyer. When such ammonium nitrate arrived in Texas City the railway company notified J. D. Latta and Company of its arrival and description.

"When the box cars of ammonium nitrate arrived in Texas City, the Texas City Railway Company had to open all the doors for 15 to 30 minutes to allow the bags to cool. When the bags first were ventilated they were hot. Not hot enough to burn the hand but hot enough to be uncomfortable. The men who unloaded the box cars were always looking for a reason to slow up their work and they usually complained about these hot bags. When the ammonium nitrate was unloaded it was placed mainly in Piers O and A, and some in Pier D. These piers were well ventilated and the bags did not again heat up. However, I believe the bags would heat-up again if stored in a confined space.

"Several months prior to April, 1947, I wrote to Spencer Chemical Company in Kansas City complaining about these hot bags. As a result a Mr. Steed came from that company to Texas City to see me. He told me the ammonium nitrate was not an explosive or dangerous. Later another man from that company came to Texas City but did not see me. After the Texas City disaster I related this discussion with Mr. Steed. However he was not contacted by anyone. I then went to Spencer Chemical Company in Parsons, Kansas, and located Steed at his home. He confirmed our previous conversation. He also stated he did not then or now think the ammonium nitrate was an explosive or dangerous.

"Prior to April 17, 1947, I never heard ammonium nitrate classified as an oxidizing material. Further the Bureau of Explosives did not consider this as a red tag cargo. The term oxidizing material was added after the disaster to my knowledge.

"On April 16, 1947, at about 8:20AM, I was in my office. It was about 750 feet by road from Pier O. One of the men came in and said there was a fire on the Grandcamp. I went down to the area. I was on the dock

HO 131-39

"from about 8:30AM to 9:07AM. I did not go aboard the Grandcamp. The Captain of the Grandcamp made the decisions concerning the fighting of the fire.

"The President of our company had called for tugs when the fire was reported to him. While I was on Pier O I talked to Pete Suderman. However, when the Tugs did not arrive, I noted the time as 9:07AM and returned to my office to inquire about the tugs.

"Tompkins of Lykes Brothers Steamship Company called me prior to the Grandcamp explosion. We talked about the fire. Tompkins knew at that time the cargo of the Grandcamp was ammonium nitrate and that the Highflyer also had ammonium nitrate as a cargo. We discussed the possibility of a fire on the Highflyer. The Grandcamp exploded at 9:12AM.

"All the records of my company were lost in the explosion. We did not handle the ocean bills of lading. Texas City Terminal Railway Company operated the agency for all the railroads who prepared the freight bills from railroad waybills after which waybills returned to delivering carrier. We also received a copy of the freight bill.

"I never talked to the Captain of the Grandcamp. Had he asked me how to fight the fire I would have told him to open the hatch and pour water into the hold. In my opinion he was not properly instructed as to fighting such a fire.

"At about 6:30PM on the same day I heard the Highflyer was on fire. It was difficult to see the Highflyer from the landside because of its position and the dense smoke from Monsanto.

"Later that night I furnished gas masks to the crew of the tugs which tried to remove the Highflyer. These tugs picked them up at the east end of Pier B while they were enroute from Galveston to Pier B.

"I have read the the foregoing three page statement and it it is true & correct.

" /s/ WALTER H. SANDBERG

HO 131-39

"Witnesses:

/s/ JOSEPH T. COOLING

Special Agent FBI

/s/ THOMAS M. DEXTER,

Special Agent, FBI,

11-8-11, - Houston, Texas"

SANDBERG stated that TOMPKINS cried all day after the Grandcamp explosion to get tugs to move the Highflyer. Further, the only reason TOMPKINS was able to get tugs that night was because Lykes Brothers supplied the crew from New Orleans. None of the tugboat men in the Texas City area would try to move the Highflyer.

SANDBERG stated that some box cars containing ammonium nitrate did not explode during the disaster. They were included in an inventory taken the following day.

SANDBERG traced these cars to the Ocean Victory. He did this by sending a man to Baltimore Maryland, about three or four months after the explosion.

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
INTERVIEW REPORT

Captain ROBERT L. WYNNE was interviewed at his office 3-7188 Cotton Exchange Building, Houston, Texas. He stated the Board of Underwriters for New York has no office in Galveston or Texas City, Texas. Further, that he turned over all pertinent records of that organization to the attorney for the underwriters, namely, FULBRIGHT, CROOKER, SHEPPARD, BATES, and JAWORSKI.

Interview with Captain ROBERT L. WYNNE File # 131-39  
on 10/31/57 at Houston, Texas  
by Special Agent JOSEPH J. DOOLING (Dictated 11/18/57)  
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HO 131-39

On October 31, 1957, Assistant United States Attorney JAMES E. ROSS, Houston, Texas, was advised of the interview with Captain ROBERT L. WINN.

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
INTERVIEW REPORT

MERRITT J. WOLF was interviewed at his office, W. R. KIRKMAN COMPANY, Fourth Floor, Cotton Building, Houston, Texas. He resides at 316 Temple, Houston, Texas.

About six or seven months after the Texas City Explosion he started to work for J. D. LATTA & COMPANY as office manager in Houston. He was so employed until about six years ago when J. D. LATTA closed his office and ceased his business. G. HARRIS EMIG, president of the Propellor Club, has the ledgers for J. D. LATTA & COMPANY. All the other records were left in the office as trash when J. D. LATTA went out of business. J. D. LATTA took none of the records. WOLF can testify to these facts.

JOHN MAJOR, a former J. D. LATTA & COMPANY employee in Texas City died seven or eight months after the explosion as a result of it.

J. D. LATTA resides at T-O Ranch, Medina, Texas. He is not bedridden but just got out of a Government hospital. LATTA has water in the body or dropsy. He is about 70 years of age and has recently dropped from 250 pounds to 140 pounds. He is in no condition to testify in any court, as he cannot walk.

Interview with MERRITT J. WOLF File # 131-39  
on 10/30/57 at Houston, Texas

by Special Agent JOSEPH J. DOOLING  
(Dictated 11/18/57)

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On October 30, 1957, ROBERT TAYLOR, Vice President of Ricordi's Partnership Company, Cotton Exchange Building, Houston, Texas, advised WALTERMAN of BURNINGS & COMPANY was present at the office of C. W. C. Long, Beach Books, Houston.

On October 31, 1957, L. WALTERMAN states he is not the WALTERMAN of BURNINGS & COMPANY. Also he is frequently mistaken for that WALTERMAN who resides in Galveston, Texas.

On November 4, 1957, JOHN SCHROEDER of H. K. SCHURIG COMPANY, Cotton Exchange Building, Galveston, advised Mrs. MILDRED REMEY left Galveston on January 26, 1957, and moved to 3965 Wedgway Drive, Fort Worth, Texas, telephone WA 6-0906.

On November 4 and 8, 1957, attempts to locate EDWARD WALTERMAN in Galveston, Texas, were unproductive.

- P -

STANDARD FORM NO. 64

OFFICE MEMORANDUM

- UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO: DIRECTOR, FBI (131-363) DATE: DEC 6 1957

FROM: SPC HOUSTON (131-39)

SUBJECT: SS WILSON B. KEENE

SS HIGHFLYER

SS GRANDCAMP, ETC.

ADMIRALTY NUMBERS 1868, 1869,  
1870

ADMIRALTY MATTER

(OO: Houston)

Enclosed herewith for the Bureau are two copies of the report of Special Agent JOSEPH J. DOOLING dated DEC 6 at Houston.

Also enclosed for the Bureau is a blank memorandum entitled WALTER H. SANDBERG.

LEADS

DALLAS

AT DALLAS, TEXAS

Will locate and interview Mrs. LOUISE REESBY, 3965 Wedgway Drive, Fort Worth, Texas, as requested in airtel to the Bureau from Houston dated 11/7/57.

KANSAS CITY

AT KANSAS CITY MISSOURI

ENCLOSURE Will locate and interview Mr. STEED of the SPENCER CHEMICAL COMPANY, as requested in Houston airtel to the Bureau dated 11/7/57.

2-Bureau (Encls. 7)  
2-Dallas (131-7) (Encls. 2)  
2-Kansas City (Encls. 2)

3-Houston

JJD 76 DEC 16 1957  
(s)

RECORDED - 7

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RE DEC 10 1957

131-363-60  
INDEX

SPC  
SAC

HO 131-39

LEADS (Con't).

SAN ANTONIO

AT MEDINA, TEXAS

Will discreetly determine whether an interview of J. D. LATTA would have an adverse effect on his physical condition and immediately advise the Houston Office. In the event such an interview would not have such an effect on J. D. LATTA, the Houston Office will immediately conduct this interview as per Bureau instructions.

HOUSTON

AT GALVESTON, TEXAS

Will locate and interview EDWARD WESTERMAN of E. S. BINNINGS and COMPANY as requested in Departmental letter.

AT HOUSTON, TEXAS

Will rainterview JOE CASH, San Jacinto Building for any information pertinent to this investigation.

REFERENCES

Houston airtel to Bureau 11/7/57.  
Report of Special Agent JOSEPH J. DOOLING (A), Houston,  
dated 11/2/57.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

*In Reply, Please Refer to  
File No.*

Houston, Texas

December 16, 1957

Walter H. Sandberg

Mr. Sandberg is a man of middle age. He presented a neat, masculine appearance. He has advanced himself to an executive position and is now general manager of the Galveston Wharves which makes him head of the Port of Galveston.

He conveys his success in his action and words. He appears to be honest in his beliefs and would make an excellent witness inasmuch as he is well respected in his community as a leader.

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ICC RAB 606  
12/13/57  
ECP/og

ENCLOSURE 131-363-60

6/4  
SAC, New York

12/20/57

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EX-135  
Director, FBI (131-363)

131-363-61  
SS WILSON B. KEENE SS HIGHFLYER -  
SS GRANDCAMP, etc., Admiralty Numbers  
1868, 1869, 1870  
ADMIRALTY MATTER

Enclosed herewith are two copies of a memorandum from Assistant Attorney General George Cochran Doub, dated 12/17/57, requesting that Peter Albert be located at New York City.

Dale M. Green, attorney, Civil Division, to whom this case is assigned, advised that he desires only that Albert's present whereabouts be ascertained and that Albert should not be contacted at this time by Bureau agents.

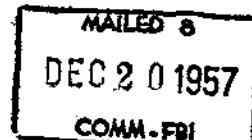
You should afford this matter preferred and continuous attention and submit results as soon as possible.

Enclosures -2

ECP:eem  
(4)C7 (u)

NOTE: The above comments made by Dale M. Green were telephonically furnished to Supervisor E. C. Palmer this date.

Toison \_\_\_\_\_  
Nichols \_\_\_\_\_  
Boardman \_\_\_\_\_  
Belmont \_\_\_\_\_  
Mohr \_\_\_\_\_  
Parsons \_\_\_\_\_  
Rosen \_\_\_\_\_  
Tamm \_\_\_\_\_  
Trotter \_\_\_\_\_  
Vase \_\_\_\_\_  
W. Room \_\_\_\_\_  
Oman \_\_\_\_\_  
Y \_\_\_\_\_



DEC 30 1957

MAIL ROOM

# FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

REPORTING OFFICE <b>HOUSTON</b>	OFFICE OF ORIGIN <b>HOUSTON</b>	DATE <b>DEC 20 1957</b>	INVESTIGATIVE PERIOD <b>11/14, 19, 29; 12/2, 3, 6/57</b>
TITLE OF CASE  <b>SS WILSON B. KEENE SS HIGHFLYER, SS GRANDCAMP, ADMIRALTY NUMBERS, 1868, 1869, 1870</b>		REPORT MADE BY <b>JOSEPH J. DOOLING</b>	TYPED BY <b>sal</b>
		CHARACTER OF CASE  <b>ADMIRALTY MATTER</b>	

SYNOPSIS:

EDWARD WESTERMAN, Manager, of Galveston Office of E. S. BINNINGS Inc., states records concerning Texas City Explosion, taken from that office by Mr. LACY, Manager, of the Houston Office of that same firm. LACY advised records in possession of WESTERMAN. Mrs. ENA McCULLOH, former J. D. LATTA employee, has no knowledge of Texas City Explosion as she was only a clerical employee for LATTA.

- P -

DETAILS:

APPROVED <i>2/1/58</i>	SPECIAL AGENT IN CHARGE	DO NOT WRITE IN SPACES BELOW	
COPIES MADE:  <b>2 - Bureau (131-363)</b>  <b>1 - USA, Houston</b>  <b>2 - Houston (131-39)</b>		<b>131-363-</b>	<b>62</b> RECORDED - 6
			<b>EX-108</b>
		<b>DEC 26 1957</b>	

*76 JAN 3 1958 w/ ftb  
6/5/80 3/9/81 leg.*

*WV*

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FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
INTERVIEW REPORT

WESTERMAN advised he has been manager of the Galveston Branch Office for E. S. BINNINGS INCORPORATED since 1946.

WESTERMAN stated that BINNINGS was the agent for the Grandcamp. He did not know who the owner of the Grandcamp was, but his company was the agent for the French Line. To his knowledge there was no connection in these contracts with Lykes Brothers. Any contract and agreement between the French Line and E. S. BINNINGS and Company was handled by Mr. BINNINGS personally in New Orleans. There was no copy of such an agreement in the Galveston Office.

WESTERMAN stated that he thought the Grandcamp was a third shipment of ammonium nitrate handled for the French Line Vessels, however, one of the communications referred to the cargo as ammonium nitrate. There were no special instructions as to the handling of this cargo. The cargo was designated as fertilizer and it showed the percentage of the ammonium nitrate it contained. WESTERMAN stated he was not aware of any Coast Guard Regulations concerning this cargo. Prior to the Texas City Explosion, he never heard it referred to as an oxidizing material.

WESTERMAN stated the cargo was handled as they handle sacked material. They tried not to get it wet in the same manner that cargoes of starch or flour would be protected from the water. WESTERMAN stated to his knowledge, the storage of this cargo was never discussed by his firm. Suderman Stevedoring Company handled these matters. WESTERMAN stated he never received any instruction from anyone concerning the nature or characteristics of the cargo or the storage of this cargo. He knows of no references being made at this time for preventing or fighting a fire of this type.

WESTERMAN stated that about 8:30 AM on the morning of the Texas City Explosion, PETE SUDELMAN called him on the telephone. SUDELMAN said there was a fire aboard the Grandcamp. He asked WESTERMAN what to do about the longshoremen. WESTERMAN told SUDELMAN to dismiss the gang and to send them home. WESTERMAN stated that he did this to cut

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Interview with EDWARD WESTERMAN File # 131-39

on 11/29/57 at 1219 U. S. National Bank Building, Galveston

by Special Agent JOSEPH J. DOOLING  
Dictated, 12/6/57

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his expenses. He did not know at that time the extent or nature of the fire. WESTERMAN stated that he called the tug boat company at Pier 10 and asked them for fire-fighting tugs. As a result they sent two tugs to the scene of the fire.

WESTERMAN stated that some years ago, Mr. LACY of the Houston Office of E. S. BINNINGS and Company came down and got the Texas City Explosion file. He got them for the attorney for the French Line. EDWARD WESTERMAN was not interviewed by this attorney. All other old records up to and including 1953 were burned or destroyed in order to make room for new records of E. S. BINNINGS and Company in Galveston.

At the time of the Texas City Explosion, R. G. POWELL was the wharf Clerk for E. S. BINNINGS, working from 7 PM at night until 6 AM in the morning. He is now employed by that same company on Pier 26 from 8 AM to 5 PM.

WESTERMAN explained the operations of BINNINGS. He is an agent for the French Line. BINNINGS obtained a cargo list from J. D. LATTA who was stock piling the cargo for the French. J. D. LATTA would give orders that so many pounds of a cargo was at a certain Pier. The Suderman Stevedoring Company was under a contract with the French Line. The BINNINGS Office in Houston notified WESTERMAN's Office that a boat was coming from Houston for cargo. BINNINGS in Galveston would coordinate the movements in order to have a faster dispatch at Galveston.

WESTERMAN stated that after he heard about the fire, he called his office in New Orleans and informed them of the fire as a routine matter. He stated that all that day he did not talk to Lykes Brothers. WESTERMAN stated that his firm and Lykes Brothers are competitors and he could not recall any conversation with them on that day.

HO 131-39

WESTERMAN stated that he had a general knowledge of the cargo on Grandcamp which he obtained orally. J. D. LATTA would give a shipping order, two copies were sent to BINNING, one to Galveston Office and the other to the Wharf Clerk. J. D. LATTA would prepare the ocean bill of lading. In this case the ocean bill of lading was executed after the explosion. It is normally completed when the vessel is loaded. WESTERMAN can not recall if his office had a teletype at that time of the explosion. He stated, however, his office did have a cargo consists or cargo booking, which he received from his home office in New Orleans.

HO 131-39

On December 2, 1957, O. N. LACY, Office Manager, E. S. BINNINGS, Cotton Exchange Building, Houston, Texas, was interviewed by JOSEPH J. DOOLING. He advised that on November 19, 1957, he obtained two documents from the Grandcamp, file number 40, from his Galveston Office. One such document was that listed as exhibition 19 in the Coast Guard hearing and the other was a copy of the cargo loading plan of the Grandcamp. He stated he has not taken any other records from WESTERMAN in Galveston, and that WESTERMAN had a file in Galveston, concerning Texas City Explosion. He stated that if the original records are not available they would be in the hands of French Line or the attorney's for the French Line or the New Orleans Office of E. S. BINNINGS. Further that E. S. BINNINGS had, he thought, a copy of every document. He stated he had the following information which he and WESTERMAN compiled concerning previous shipment by the French Line of ammonium nitrate. One - ARGEATAN (number 14), arrival December 24, 1946, and sailed January 6, 1947. Loading started December 26, 1946, completed January 5, 1957.

Two - Lieutenant J. Le MEUR, (number 37), arrival April 2, 1947, sailed April 9, 1947, loading started April 3, 1947, completed April 8, 1947.

LACY stated he believed the foregoing records were destroyed. He stated that the Grandcamp arrived in the Roads on April 10, 1947. She docked on April 11, 1947. He started the load at 1300 on April 11, 1947. And they stopped loading at 0912 on April 16, 1947.

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
INTERVIEW REPORT

Mrs. KNA Mc CULLOH stated she was a J. D. LATTA employee from 1946 to early 1949. She was not employed by them when the company closed. Her duties consisted of making on a ditto machine and running off the ocean bill of lading and filing. She stated she had no authority whatsoever. Mrs. REESBY was the boss and she handled the telephone and had some authority. Mr. CLARK ran the office. She had no connection with the Grandcamp, but knew the cargo on the Grandcamp was a fertilizer.

She stated that she thought J. D. LATTA and Company handled ammonium nitrate prior to the Texas City Explosion. She referred to it in her work as ammonium nitrate, but did not know it was dangerous. She advised she was in the office working the day it blew up.

She never heard it listed or referred to as an oxidizing material.

Mrs. Mc CULLOH stated that other than Mrs. REESBY, the only other former employee is DOROTHY FARROW, who is now married and is known as Mrs. FARROW in Port Arthur, Texas.

Throughout the interview Mrs. Mc CULLOH stated she was only a clerical employee and did not know much about the business or it's operations.

- P -

Interview with MRS. KNA Mc CULLOH File # 131-39

on 12/2/57 at Houston, Texas

by Special Agent JOSEPH J. DOOLING  
Dictated 12/6/57

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## Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : DIRECTOR, FBI (131-363)

DATE: DEC 20 1957

FROM : SAC, HOUSTON (131-39)

SUBJECT: SS WILSON B. KEENE  
SS HIGHFLYER,  
SS GRANDCAMP, ADMIRALTY  
NUMBERS, 1868, 1869, 1870  
(OO: Houston)Enclosed herewith for the Bureau are two copies  
of the report of SA JOSEPH J. DOOLING, dated DEC 20 1957,  
at Houston.ADMINISTRATIVE:A blank memorandum entitled EDWARD WESTERMAN  
will be submitted on the reinterview of him.LEADS:HOUSTON:AT GALVESTON, TEXAS.

1. Will reinterview PETE SUDERMAN as requested in Department letter dated 11/27/57.
2. Will reinterview EDWARD WESTERMAN of E. S. BINNINGS and Company.
3. Will reinterview R. G. POWELL, Pier 26, E. S. BINNINGS and Company.

AT MEDINA, TEXAS.Will interview J. D. LATTA at his home as  
instructed by the Bureau.

RECORDED - 6

131-363-63

DEC 26 1957

(2) Bureau (Encls. 2)  
(2) HoustonJJD:sal  
(4)

ENCLOSURE

EX-103

6 JAN 31 1958 109

HO 131-39

AT HOUSTON, TEXAS.

1. Will reinterview JOE CASH, San Jacinto Building, for any information pertinent to this investigation.
2. Will reinterview Captain ROBERT L. WYNNE as requested in Department letter dated, 11/27/57.

1/2/58

AIRTEL

RECORDED-35

131-363-64

TO: SAC, Houston (131-39)  
FROM: Director, FBI (131-363)

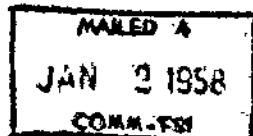
SS WILSON B. KEENE,  
SS HIGHFLYER,  
SS GRANDCAMP  
ADMIRALTY NUMBERS 1868, 1869, 1870  
ADMIRALTY MATTER

Reurairtel 12/30/57.

SA Murry C. Falkner presently assigned  
Mobile.

In view of urgent need for economy in the  
Bureau's operations and to prevent joint investigation  
by SA Dooling and AUSA Ross, authority is not granted  
for SA Dooling to accompany Ross to New Orleans.  
Advise AUSA Ross that if he desires any investigation  
by the Bureau at New Orleans, he should request same  
and we will conduct such investigation independently.

JKP:eeem  
(4) [initials]



F-136

JKP

JAN 7 1958

MAIL ROOM

Tolson  
Boardman  
Belmont  
Mohr  
Nease  
Persons  
Rosen  
Tamm  
Trotter  
Clayton  
Tele. Room  
Holloman  
Fandy

F B I

Date: 12-30-57

Transmit the following in \_\_\_\_\_

(Type in plain text or code)

Via AIRTELAIRMAIL

(Priority or Method of Mailing)

TO: DIRECTOR, FBI (131-363) *Polygraph*

FROM: SAC, HOUSTON (131-39)

SUBJECT: SS WILSON B. KEENE  
 SS HIGHFLYER,  
 SS GRANDCAMP  
 ADMIRALTY NUMBERS 1868, 1869, 1870  
 ADMIRALTY MATTER  
 (OO-Houston)

*Mobile*  
 Bureau is requested to advise the present whereabouts of SA MURRY C. FALKNER. SA FALKNER, on March 26 and 27, 1948, at Galveston, Texas, took a signed statement from MAURICE LE BROZEC, 32 Rue Tourville, Le Havre, France, at Galveston, Texas. Also present were SAs ROY T. NOONAN and LEO K. COOK. SA FALKNER acted as interpreter inasmuch as LE BROZEC did not speak any English and this interview was conducted in French.

Departmental attorney DALE GREEN and AUSA JAMES E. ROSS, Houston, anticipate using this signed statement. They also desire to interview SA FALKNER as to his knowledge of French and LE BROZEC's understanding of FALKNER in the event LE BROZEC denies knowledge of the contents of the signed statement.

On 12-30-57 AUSA ROSS telephonically conferred with Mr. GREEN. They desire investigation in New Orleans sometime between 1-9-58 and 1-13-58, such investigation includes reinterview of pertinent witnesses, investigation as to firefighting regulations, and a review of the documents of E. S. BINNINGS AND COMPANY records. Mr. ROSS intends to proceed to New Orleans and has requested that SA JOSEPH J. DOOLING accompany him on this trip for approximately 3 days. Bureau permission for this investigation in the New Orleans division is requested.

HAWKINS

3-Bureau (AM)

1-Houston JJD: krs (4)

RECORDED-35

131-363-64

(2) Approved:

Special Agent in Charge

EX-108

Sent

21

JAN 1 1958

Per

1/6/58

AIRTEL

RECORDED-18

EX-131

TO: 131-363-65  
SAC, Houston (131-39)

FROM: Director, FBI (131-363)

SS WILSON B. KEENE,

SS HIGHFLYER,

SS GRANDCAMP

ADMIRALTY NUMBERS 1868, 1869, 1870

ADMIRALTY MATTER

Attached are two copies of a Civil Division memorandum dated 1/3/58, which requests the location and interview of certain additional witnesses in this matter.

Note that on page 4 the attached memorandum requests that this additional investigation be completed by 2/1/58. Trial in this matter is tentatively scheduled for 3/4/58 and the Department has advised it may be necessary to conduct pretrial interviews with or to take depositions from certain of the witnesses listed in the attached memorandum.

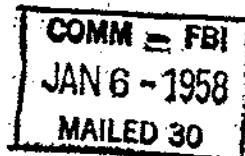
You should assign sufficient personnel to the handling of the additional investigation requested in the attached memorandum and to all other outstanding leads in this matter to insure that all investigation is completed and reports are submitted to reach the Bureau not later than 2/1/58 without fail.

Enclosures - 2

JKP:eem

(4) *LM*

Tolson \_\_\_\_\_  
Nichols \_\_\_\_\_  
Boardman \_\_\_\_\_  
Belmont \_\_\_\_\_  
Mohr \_\_\_\_\_  
Parsons \_\_\_\_\_  
Rosen \_\_\_\_\_  
Tamm \_\_\_\_\_  
Trotter \_\_\_\_\_  
Nease \_\_\_\_\_  
Tele. Room \_\_\_\_\_  
Holloman \_\_\_\_\_  
Candy \_\_\_\_\_



131-363-65  
JAN 9 1958

64 JAN 10 1958

# FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Reporting Office <b>NEW YORK</b>	Office of Origin <b>HOUSTON</b>	Date <b>1/14/58</b>	Investigative Period <b>1/3, 6, 7/58</b>
<b>TITLE OF CASE</b>  <b>SS WILSON B. KELLY - SS HIGHFLYER - SS GRANDCAMP, etc., Admiralty No. 1868, 1869, 1870</b>		Report made by <b>MICHAEL D. MC NANAPA</b>	Typed by: <b>JLH</b>
		<b>CHARACTER OF CASE</b>  <b>ADMIRALITY MATTER</b>	

Synopsis:

PETER ALBERT, who was formerly employed by the French Supply Council, 44 Beaver Street, NY, NY, is presently employed by Ishbrandsten Lines, 26 Broadway, NY, NY, as manager of their Petroleum Department and he resides at 3103 Foster Avenue, Brooklyn, NY.

- RUG

DETAILS:

MR. THOMAS MULVY, elevator operator of the building located at 44 Beaver Street, New York City, advised on January 3, 1958, that he recalled a man by the name of PETER ALBERT who was formerly employed by the French Supply Council in that building, but that the Council had disbanded and vacated the building about eight years ago. He advised that a man by the name of MOUNTFORD, who is still employed in the shipping industry in New York City, was also employed by the Council and might be able to furnish information concerning the current employment and residence of PETER ALBERT.

Approved <i>SP</i>	Special Agent in Charge	Do not write in spaces below	
Copies made:  <b>2 - Bureau (131-363) 1 - New York (131-392) 2 - HOUSTON (1-USA)</b>		<b>131-363-66</b>	<b>RECORDED - 40</b>
		<b>JAN 15 1958</b>	<b>EX-135</b>
		<b>WJD</b>	<b>STATE SEC'D</b>

NY 131-392

Mr. JOHN W. MOUNTFORD, of the Judson and Sheldon, National Carloading Company, 17 Rector Street, New York City, advised on January 7, 1958, that he recalled PETER ALBERT, who had been employed by the French Supply Council, 44 Beaver Street, New York City, and that he believed that ALBERT was presently employed by the Isbrandsten Lines at 26 Broadway, New York City.

Mr. WILLIAM J. DISCILL, Personnel Manager of the Isbrandsten Lines, Inc., 26 Broadway, New York City, advised on January 7, 1958, that PETER ALBERT, who had formerly been employed by the French Supply Council, 44 Beaver Street, New York City, is presently employed by the Isbrandsten Lines and has been employed there for about ten years. He stated that ALBERT is now manager of their Petroleum Department and resides at 3103 Foster Avenue, Brooklyn, New York.

- REC

## Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : DIRECTOR, FBI (131-363)

DATE: 1/14/58

FROM: *EJF* SAC, NEW YORK (131-392)SUBJECT: SS WILSON B. KEENE -  
SS HIGHFLYER - SS GRANDCAMP,  
etc., Admiralty No. 1868, 1869,  
1870  
ADMIRALTY MATTER*QH*  
Enclosed is the original and one copy of the report of SA MICHAEL D.  
MC NAMARA, dated and captioned as above.This case is being placed in a pending inactive status awaiting further  
instructions from the Bureau.

REFERENCE: Bureau letter to New York, dated 12/20/57, in captioned matter.

A

RECORDED - 40

131-363-67

(2) Bureau (131-363) (Encls. 2)  
1 - New York (131-392)

EX-135

JAN 15 1958

MM:jlh  
(3)

F-135 A

— 363 —

MICHAEL  
(2cc H)  
1/22/58  
ENCLOSURE  
EX-135  
64 JAN 29 1958

JL

1-14-58

AIRTEL

TO: SAC, HOUSTON (131-39)  
FROM: DIRECTOR, FBI (131-363)

SS WILSON B. KERNE - SS HIGHFLYER -  
SS GRANDCAMP, etc., Admiralty Numbers  
1868, 1869, 1870  
ADMIRALTY MATTER

Review of Bureau file reflects  
that auxiliary offices receiving copies of  
this airtel have outstanding leads in this  
matter.

Those offices are instructed to cover  
such leads immediately, if not previously done,  
and to expedite submission of reports. Reports,  
completing all investigation in this case are to  
be submitted to reach the Bureau not later  
than 2/1/58, without fail.

2 cc: Dallas (131-7)  
2 cc: Kansas City  
2 cc: New York

JKP:eem  
(10) 7/14

131-363-68

2 JAN 15 1958

RECORDED-92

MAILED 5
JAN 14 1958
COMM-FBI

EX-117

Tolson \_\_\_\_\_  
Nichols \_\_\_\_\_  
Boardman \_\_\_\_\_  
Belmont \_\_\_\_\_  
Mohr \_\_\_\_\_  
Parsons \_\_\_\_\_  
Rosen \_\_\_\_\_  
Tamm \_\_\_\_\_  
Trotter \_\_\_\_\_  
Nease \_\_\_\_\_  
Tele. Room \_\_\_\_\_  
Holloman \_\_\_\_\_  
Gandy \_\_\_\_\_

JAN 20 1958  
FBI-HOUSTON

1-16-58

AIRTEL

TO: SAC, HOUSTON (131-39)  
FROM: DIRECTOR, FBI (131-363) 69  
RECORDED - 81

SS WILSON B. KEENE,  
SS HIGHFLYER,  
SS GRANDCAMP  
ADMIRALTY NUMBERS 1868, 1869, 1870  
ADMIRALTY MATTER

Reurairtel 1/14/58.

Dale Green, attorney, Admiralty and Shipping Section, Civil Division, has advised he does not have signed statements referred to in reairtel. He advised that AUSA Ross has certain signed statements, which he obtained from Federal Records Center, Fort Worth, but Green does not know whether Ross has statements identified in reairtel.

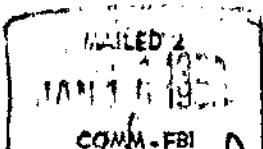
Green requested that the six witnesses named in reairtel be reinterviewed and that new signed statements be obtained in the event previous statements cannot be located.

Dallas will immediately attempt to locate instant statements at Federal Records Center, Fort Worth, and suairtel results to Bureau and Houston. Dallas will handle at once, since deadline for completion of all investigation is 2/1/58.

Houston will determine whether AUSA Ross has instant statements and in the event the statements are not located at Houston or Fort Worth, will take new statements when these witnesses are interviewed.

2 cc: Dallas (131-7)

JKP:eem  
(6) *JKP*



MAIL ROOM

Toleson \_\_\_\_\_  
Nichols \_\_\_\_\_  
Boardman \_\_\_\_\_  
Belmont \_\_\_\_\_  
Mohr \_\_\_\_\_  
Persons \_\_\_\_\_  
Rosen \_\_\_\_\_  
Tamm \_\_\_\_\_  
Trotter \_\_\_\_\_  
Nease \_\_\_\_\_  
Tele. Room \_\_\_\_\_  
Holloman \_\_\_\_\_  
Gandy \_\_\_\_\_

F B I

Date:

Transmit the following in 1/14/58  
(Type in plain text or code)Via AIRTEL AIRMAIL  
(Priority or Method of Mailing)

TO: DIRECTOR, FBI (131-363)

FROM: SAC, HOUSTON (131-39)

SUBJECT: SS WILSON B. KEENE,  
SS HIGHFLYER,  
SS GRANDCAMP,  
ADMIRALTY NUMBERS 1868, 1869, 1870,  
ADMIRALTY MATTER

Re: Departmental memorandum dated 1/3/58.

Referenced memorandum requested interview of 21 witnesses. To date, the Houston Office has been unable to locate the signed statements given by the following individuals in the Texas City Disaster investigation, Houston File 120-5:

- (a) CLYDE RAYMOND ANDERSON  
120-5-IV-121
- (f) H. C. EDINBURGH  
120-5-IV-69
- (i) EARL B. LEE  
120-5-IV-196

③ Bureau (AM)  
2-Dallas (131-7) (AM)      **RECORDED - 81**

1-Houston

JJD:md  
(6)

1/16 1958  
Date of issue  
1/17/58  
1/18/58  
Ex. 116

**131-363-69**

8 JAN 17 1958

Approved: J Sent: \_\_\_\_\_ M Per: \_\_\_\_\_  
Special Agent in Charge

F B I

Date:

Transmit the following in \_\_\_\_\_

(Type in plain text or code)

Via \_\_\_\_\_  
(Priority or Method of Mailing)

HO 131-39

- (k) ALFRED MANIS  
120-5-IV-77
- (m) JAMES WILBURN NEWLIN  
120-5-IV-168
- (t) CLARENCE HENRY WELLS  
120-5-IV-178

The Bureau is requested to contact Departmental Attorney, Mr. DALE GREEN, and ascertain if he has any of the foregoing signed statements or knows their whereabouts. The Bureau is requested to advise Houston and Dallas as to the results of this inquiry.

Dallas, at Fort Worth, Texas, will in the event  
the Bureau is unsuccessful in locating all six signed statements, review the records in the Federal Records Center, Fort Worth, Texas, and ascertain if any of the Bureau's signed statements in the Texas City Disaster file are residing in Fort Worth. If so, forward signed statements Registered Mail to Houston.

-2-

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_ Sent: \_\_\_\_\_ M Per: \_\_\_\_\_  
Special Agent in Charge

F B I

Date: 1/15/58

Transmit the following in PLAIN TEXT

(Type in plain text or code)

Via AIRTELAIRMAIL

(Priority or Method of Mailing)

TO: DIRECTOR, FBI (131-363)

FROM: SAC, DALLAS (131-7)

RE: SS WILSON B. KEENE - SS HIGHFLYER -  
SS GRANDCAMP, etc., Admiralty Numbers  
1868, 1869, 1870  
ADMIRALTY MATTER

OO: Houston

Re Bureau airtel to Houston, 1/14/58.

This case RUC Dallas with report of SA B. TOM CARTER, Dallas,  
11/18/57.

WEEKS

③ - Bureau  
1 - Houston (131-39)  
1 - Dallas  
PMB:mfr  
(5)

OK - this lead had  
been re-set in Ho  
report 12/6/57.

RECORDED-18 131-363-70

EX-135

13 JAN 16 1958

76JAN22 1958

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_ Sent: \_\_\_\_\_ M Per: \_\_\_\_\_  
Special Agent in Charge

F B I

Date: 1/21/58

Transmit the following in

## PLAIN TEXT

(Type in plain text or code)

Via AIRTELAIRMAIL

(Priority or Method of Mailing)

TO: DIRECTOR, FBI (131-363)

FROM: SAC, DALLAS (131-7)

SS WILSON B. KEENE,  
 SS HIGHFLYER,  
 SS GRANDCAMP  
 ADMIRALTY NUMBERS 1868, 1869, 1870  
 ADMIRALTY MATTER  
 OO - HO

Re Bureau airtel to Houston, 1/16/58, and Houston  
 airtel to Bureau, 1/14/58.

Mr. JOHN WATSON, Federal Records Center, Fort Worth, Texas, on 1/20/58, exhibited the following files to SA B. TOM CARTER: CLYDE RAYMOND ANDERSON, Civil Action (CA) #746; H. C. EDINBURGH, CA #736; ALFRED MANIS, CA #791; JAMES WILBURN NEWLIN, CA #791; and CLARENCE HENRY WELLS, CA #727. An examination of these files failed to reveal any statements of the above-mentioned individuals or type of statements. Mr. WATSON was unable to locate any file on the name of EARL B. LEE.

Mr. WATSON explained that on 10/25/57, AUSA JAMES E. ROSS of Houston, Texas, called at the Records Center in Fort Worth and with the assistance of three employees at the Records Center, examined approximately 200 boxes of records in connection with the Texas City Disaster files. He took about 25 boxes of these records with him on his return trip to Houston. Mr. WATSON stated his records do not reflect a complete breakdown as to each item taken by Mr. ROSS. It is possible the statements might be in the material taken by Mr. ROSS. However, Mr. WATSON explained that according to his index, it does not reflect any statements of the six above-mentioned individuals as being in his files.

RECORDED - 75

(3) - Bureau  
 (2) - Houston (131-39)  
 1 - Dallas  
 BTC:sss

(6)

EX-135

20 JAN 23 1958

Approved: 60 JAN 24 1958 Sent: \_\_\_\_\_ M Per: \_\_\_\_\_

Special Agent in Charge

F B I

Date:

Transmit the following in \_\_\_\_\_  
(Type in plain text or code)Via \_\_\_\_\_  
(Priority or Method of Mailing)

DL 131-7

It is suggested Houston consult with Mr. JAMES E. ROSS, AUSA at Houston. If the statements are not found, it is suggested that additional information, if possible, be secured from the USA's office in Houston that might assist in locating the statements at the Federal Records Center in Fort Worth.

RUC.

WEEKS

- 2 -

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_ Sent: \_\_\_\_\_ M Per: \_\_\_\_\_  
Special Agent in Charge

SAC, New York (131-392)

1-22-58

Director, FBI (131-363)

SS WILSON B. KEENE,  
SS HIGHFLYER, SS GRANDCAMP, etc.  
Admiralty Nos. 1868, 1869, 1870  
ADMIRALTY MATTER

Rerep SA Michael D. McNamara, 1/14/58, New York.

For the information of New York, Houston is origin  
in this matter. Two copies of rerep are forwarded herewith  
to Houston. New York should change its copy to reflect  
Houston as origin, the status RUC and show two copies  
designated for Houston (1 - USA).

2 cc: Houston (131-39) (Enclosures - 2)

JKP:eem

(6) *Allen*

RECORDED - 75

*B*

*73*

Tolson \_\_\_\_\_  
Nichols \_\_\_\_\_  
Boardman \_\_\_\_\_  
Belmont \_\_\_\_\_  
Mohr \_\_\_\_\_  
Parsons \_\_\_\_\_  
Rosen \_\_\_\_\_  
Tamm \_\_\_\_\_  
Trotter \_\_\_\_\_  
Nease \_\_\_\_\_  
Tele. Room \_\_\_\_\_  
Holloman \_\_\_\_\_  
Gandy \_\_\_\_\_

100-131-363-75

COMM-FBI
JAN 22 1958
MAILED 20

EX-135

100-131-363-75  
100-131-363-75  
100-131-363-75

100-131-363-75

# **FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION**

Reporting Office <b>KANSAS CITY</b>	Office of Origin <b>HOUSTON</b>	Date <b>1-17-58</b>	Investigative Period <b>11-14, 27; 12-10; 1-8-58</b>
TITLE OF CASE  <u>SS WILSON B. KEENE</u> <u>SS HIGHFLYER</u> <u>SS GRANDCAMP, ETC.</u> <u>ADMIRALTY NUMBERS 1868, 1869, 1870</u>		Report made by <b>ARTHUR N. THOMPSON</b>	Typed by <b>JL</b>
		CHARACTER OF CASE  <b>ADMIRALTY MATTER</b>	

### Synopsis

FLOYD CLIFTON STEED, Joplin, Missouri, advised he made a trip in behalf of Spencer Chemical Company in April or May, 1946, to find out the problems in handling ammonium nitrate fertilizer prior to Spencer Chemical Company going into operation. He talked to WALTER SANDBERG on this trip but does not recall having told SANDBERG that ammonium nitrate was not an explosive or dangerous and if asked he would have told him that it is an oxidizing material.

RUC

DETAILS: On November 14, 1957, LA VERNE SIEBERT, Personnel Officer, Spencer Chemical Company, 1004 Baltimore, Kansas City, Missouri, advised SA JOHN NIELSEN that FLOYD STEED is presently employed as Shift Supervisor, Spencer Chemical Company, Pittsburg, Kansas. His home address is 1815 Jackson Street, Joplin, Missouri.

Approved Copies made:	Special Agent in Charge	Do not write in spaces below		
2 - Bureau (131-363) 3 - Houston (131-39) (1, USA, Houston) 1 - Kansas City (131-13)	131-363 - 944	RECORDED-24		X-135
	20 JAN 24 1958			10-6 1/2 1/2

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647 10-18600 10074  
C-1 JAN 27 1958

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
INTERVIEW REPORT

1-16-58

On January 8, 1958, FLOYD CLIFTON STEED, 1815 Jackson Street, Joplin, Missouri, stated that he is employed as a Shift Supervisor for the Spencer Chemical Company, P. O. Box 604, Pittsburg, Kansas.

He said that during World War II he was employed by the Military Chemical Works, Inc., at the Kansas Ordnance Plant, Parsons, Kansas. He said that they were operating an ammonium nitrate graining plant for the United States Government from August 1945 to June 1946.

He said that the production was being sent to various overseas countries and some was shipped through the Texas City Terminal Railway Company.

He stated that in the spring of 1946 Mr. SPENCER had put together his organization which is now the Spencer Chemical Company, and had effected a lease for the Jayhawk Works, where the plant is now housed at Pittsburg, Kansas and also the Kansas Ordnance Plant at Parsons, Kansas and was anticipating a private operating corporation, beginning in June, 1946.

He said that they wanted to find out the problems in handling ammonium nitrate fertilizer and therefore in April or May, 1946 the Spencer Chemical Company sent him on a trip to visit some of the forwarding agencies that were handling the produce and during this trip he visited the Texas City Terminal Railway Company and met WALTER SANBERG.

Mr. STEED said that his company was receiving numerous damage and shortage claims with respect to the paper bag containers which were 100 pound 6 layer multi-wall paper bags.

He said they had received shortage claims from all of the forwarding companies and particularly from the Texas City Terminal Railway Company.

He stated that ammonium nitrate is hygroscopic or "draws moisture" and therefore there was an asphalt laminated ply in the

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Interview with FLOYD CLIFTON STEED File # KC 131-13  
on 1-8-58 at Joplin, Missouri Dictated: 1-14-58  
by Special Agent ARTHUR N. THOMPSON ji

bags. Some of the suppliers of these bags were using a low melting point asphalt in their bags and the residual heat of the ammonium nitrate caused the asphalt to melt and bleed through the other layers of the bags and the structure of the bag would weaken and the bags were then easily broken, causing some of this loss. This also caused other handling problems because of the asphalt bleeding through to the other layers of the bag and making them undesirable to handle.

It was established that the containers were not what the Spencer Chemical Company desired to use and upon his recommendation the company secured a better bag.

He stated that as he recalls, the Spencer Chemical Company sold their product in domestic business and he does not recall his company having shipped any of their product to Texas City, Texas.

STEED stated that he made no record of his conversation with SANDBERG while at Texas City, Texas and due to the lapse of time he does not specifically recall their conversations. He said that he does not now recall discussing with SANDBERG the subject of the bags heating but if he discussed the subject with SANDBERG he would have told him the heat was in the product when bagged and that the bags would gradually cool. After the bags were cooled they would have to have an external medium to cause them to reheat.

He said that he does not recall having told SANDBERG that ammonium nitrate was not an explosive. He related that he might have said "We don't consider it an explosive". By that he would mean that they did not handle the product as an explosive. He said that knowing the product as he did at the time he does not believe that he could have made a statement to the effect that it could not have been made to explode.

He said that they had received complaints from handlers of the product in regard to the bags, probably because of heat damage to bags and possibly because of heat in the cars when opened.

He said that he would not have told SANDBERG that ammonium nitrate was not an explosive or dangerous unless he had qualified his statement and that if SANDBERG had asked him he would have told him that it is an oxidizing material.

KC 131-13

STEED stated during the summer of 1947 SANDBERG came to his residence in Parsons, Kansas. SANDBERG did not contact him prior to this visit and arrived at his residence in a taxicab. SANDBERG only stayed at his residence a few minutes and it was STEED's impression that SANDBERG came to his residence to ascertain if he was the same FLOYD STEED who had talked to him in Texas City, Texas.

He stated that on this visit to Parsons, Kansas, SANDBERG did not ask his opinion or discuss with him as to whether ammonium nitrate is an explosive or dangerous. He said that frankly he was somewhat surprised because SANDBERG had no particular discussion with him concerning the Texas City explosion and only appeared interested in locating him and verifying that he was the Mr. STEED who had talked to him in Texas City, Texas.

Mr. STEED stated that he did not desire to furnish a signed statement due to the lapse of time since his conversations with Mr. SANDBERG but would be willing to testify to these conversations as best recalled by him.

RUC

## Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : DIRECTOR FBI (131-363)

DATE: 1-17-58

FROM: *prty* SAC KANSAS CITY (131-13)

SUBJECT: SS WILSON B. KEENE  
 SS HIGHFLYER  
 SS GRANDCAMP, ETC.  
 ADMIRALTY NUMBERS 1868, 1869, 1870.  
 ADMIRALTY MATTER

OO: Houston

Enclosed for the Bureau are two copies of report of SA ARTHUR N. THOMPSON dated 1-17-58 at Kansas City and two copies of letterhead memorandum concerning FLOYD CLIFTON STEED.

Enclosed for the Houston Division are three copies of report of SA ARTHUR N. THOMPSON dated 1-17-58 at Kansas City and three copies of letterhead memorandum concerning FLOYD CLIFTON STEED. Also enclosed for the Houston Division is one copy of Departmental request dated 10-14-57 and one copy of report of SA JOSEPH J. DOOLING, Houston, 11-2-57.

Efforts were made on 11-27-57 and 12-10-57 to locate FLOYD CLIFTON STEED at the Spencer Chemical Company, Pittsburg, Kansas, however it was determined he was out of the city on these dates.

REFERENCES: Houston airtel to Bureau 11-7-57;  
 Report of SA JOSEPH J. DOOLING, Houston, 12-6-57.

- 2 - Bureau (131-363) (Enclosures, 4)
- 3 - Houston (131-39) (Enclosures, 8)
- 1 - Kansas City (131-13)

ANT:jl  
 (6)

RECORDED-24

EX-135

20 JAN 24 1958

131-363-75

ENCLOSURE

64 JAN 27 1958 EX-135

R. W. W. J. W.



United States Department of Justice  
Federal Bureau of Investigation

IN REPLY, PLEASE REFER TO  
FILE NO. 131-13

Kansas City, Missouri  
January 17, 1958

FLOYD CLIFTON STEED, who is 40 years of age, resides at 1815 Jackson Street, Joplin, Missouri and is employed as a Shift Supervisor for the Spencer Chemical Company, Pittsburg, Kansas, who are producers of ammonium nitrate fertilizer.

STEED attended Pittsburg State College, Pittsburg, Kansas for two years, during which he took courses in chemistry. In 1941 he took a 12 weeks special course at the University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas, in explosives.

During World War II he was employed at the Kansas Ordnance Plant, Parsons, Kansas in the production and inspection of ammonium nitrates and the inspection and loading of bombs and shells. Since that time he has been employed by the Spencer Chemical Company.

STEED is married and has two children. He makes a nice appearance, answers questions deliberately and expresses himself well. He speaks slowly and clearly and gives the appearance of giving a great deal of thought to his answers.

Recd by 06/21/58  
9 KPLeg.

131-363-75

ENCLOSURE

F B I

Date: January 23, 1958

Transmit the following in \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Type in plain text or code)

Via AIRTEL AIRMAIL  
 (Priority or Method of Mailing)

TO: DIRECTOR, FBI (131-363)

FROM: SAC, HOUSTON (131-39)

SUBJECT: SS WILSON B. KEENE;  
 SS HIGHFLYER; SS GRANDCAMP,  
 Limitation of Liability, April 16 and  
 17, 1947; Petitions of Lykes Brothers  
 Steamship Company and Republic of France  
 Southern Texas Admiralty Numbers  
 1868, 1869, 1870  
 ADMIRALTY MATTERS  
 OO: Houston

RE: Departmental request of DALE GREEN, 1/22/58.

Enclosed herewith are photostatic copies of  
 the signed statements of WILLIAM THOMPSON, LEROY HASKELL,  
 MONACK, and MAURICE LE BROZEC. It is requested that these  
 photostatic copies be made available immediately to Mr.  
 GREEN.

② - Bureau (AM) (Encls. 3) (RM)  
 1 - Houston

JJD/mfh  
 (4)

RECORDED-24-12  
 1cc x enclo to Dale  
 Green 1/21-363-76  
 JAN 25 1958

3 ENCLOSURE

57 JAN 30 '58  
 Approved: \_\_\_\_\_ Sent: \_\_\_\_\_ M Per: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Special Agent in Charge

SAC, Houston (131-39)

1-27-58

Director, FBI (131-363)-77

RECORDED-92

EX-135

SS WILSON B. KEENE - SS HIGHFLYER -  
SS GRANDCAMP, ETC.  
Admiralty Nos. 1868, 1869, 1870  
ADMIRALTY MATTER

Reurairtel 1/21/58.

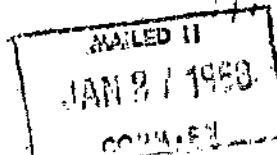
ce  
Authority is granted for SA Dooling to assist AUSA Ross at the counsel table during trial of this matter.

Upon completion of the trial you should advise the Bureau of the assistance rendered to Ross by SA Dooling and specifically what the agent was called upon to do during the trial.

JKP:gem  
(4) *2-1*

NOTE: This action in Admiralty arises out of the Texas City disaster of April, 1947. We have conducted a tremendous amount of investigation since 1947 regarding the disaster and we have investigated some 2,000 individual cases, representing suits under Federal Tort Claims Act brought by persons with injuries and property damages. We have conducted a great amount of additional investigation since November, 1956, to assist the Government in these Admiralty cases, in which the Government seeks to establish that the owners of the vessels involved were responsible for the explosions and fire, which caused the Texas City disaster. If successful, the Government may realize several million dollars in recoveries as a result of these Admiralty cases. Since thousands of persons have been interviewed and a great number of exhibits will be introduced at the trial, including business records which we have examined, it is recommended SA Dooling be permitted to assist the AUSA at the counsel table during the trial.

Tolson \_\_\_\_\_  
Nichols \_\_\_\_\_  
Boardman \_\_\_\_\_  
Belmont \_\_\_\_\_  
Mohr \_\_\_\_\_  
Parsons \_\_\_\_\_  
Rosen \_\_\_\_\_  
Tamm \_\_\_\_\_  
Trotter \_\_\_\_\_  
Nease \_\_\_\_\_  
Tele. Room \_\_\_\_\_  
Holloman \_\_\_\_\_  
Gandy \_\_\_\_\_



64 JAN 30 1958  
MAIL ROOM

F B I

Date: 1/21/58

Transmit the following in \_\_\_\_\_  
(Type in plain text or code)

Via AIRTEL AIRMAIL  
(Priority or Method of Mailing)

TO: DIRECTOR, FBI (131-363)  
FROM: SAC, HOUSTON (131-39)  
RE: SS WILSON B. KEENE - SS HIGHFLYER -  
SS GRANDCAMP, ETC.  
Admiralty Nos. 1868, 1869, 1870  
ADMIRALTY MATTER  
(OO: Houston)

a  
On 1/16/58 AUSA JAMES E. ROSS requested that the following individuals previously interviewed in this case, in connection with the Texas City Disaster case, be located. Their addresses in 1948 were as follows:

EDWARD WOODROW BALLEW  
Route 4, Rusk, Texas

ALVIS PEARL BALLEW  
Route 4, Rusk, Texas

WILLIAM F. BALLEW  
Route 4, Rusk, Texas, or  
114 First Avenue, North, Texas City, Texas

JAMES HERBERT BALLEW  
Route 4, Rusk, Texas

2  
AUSA ROSS has made a request of this office to have SA JOSEPH J. DOOLING assist him at the counsel table during the

3 - Bureau (AM)  
2 - Dallas (131-7) (AM) RECORDED-92  
1 - Houston

JJD:em/ahf

131-363-79  
10 28  
10 JAN 23 1958  
R. J. D.

(6)

EX-135

Approved:

Sent: M Per:

Special Agent in Charge

1-29-58 SIC 101 EEE 7m

F B I

Date:

Transmit the following in \_\_\_\_\_

(Type in plain text or code)

Via \_\_\_\_\_  
(Priority or Method of Mailing)HO.  
131-39

trial of this case, which commences on 3/4/58 and which, Mr. ROSS estimates, will take approximately 6 weeks to try.

DALLAS - Requested to immediately locate only (no interview requested at this time) and advise Houston Office of the present whereabouts of the BALLEW individuals, set forth above, allegedly residing Rusk, Texas. It should be noted investigation at Texas City reflects that WILLIAM BALLEW did live at Texas City but has moved away some time ago leaving no forwarding address, possibly returning to Rusk.

In the AUSA's request to this office to have Agent DOOLING assist in the trial of this case, Mr. ROSS stated this request was being made due to the extremely large volume of exhibits and the large number of witnesses who would be utilized, all of which Agent DOOLING ~~is~~ familiar. It will be noted the exhibits include business type records, previous testimony, signed statements, etc. Mr. ROSS stated it would be extremely helpful to him and Departmental Attorney DALE GREEN if this request could be granted.

It is requested that Agent DOOLING be permitted to comply with Mr. ROSS' request to assist in this matter, inasmuch as the trial of this case is deemed extremely important and if the Government is successful the Bureau will receive up to a fifty million dollar recovery. The Bureau's advice relative to this matter is requested at the earliest possible date.

DALLAS - Please expedite above investigation.

HAWKINS

-2-

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_ Sent: \_\_\_\_\_ M Per: \_\_\_\_\_  
Special Agent in Charge

1-27-58

AIRTEL

TO: SAC, SAN DIEGO

RECORDED-92 FROM: DIRECTOR, FBI (131-363) 78

SS WILSON B. KEENE,  
SS HIGHFLYER, SS GRANDCAMP, etc.  
Admiralty Numbers 1868,  
1869, 1870  
ADMIRALTY MATTERS

Re Houston airtel 1/23/58.

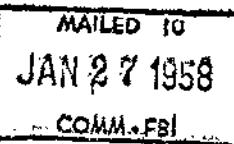
Paragraph number five on page four of  
reairtel should end "...\$12 per diem" rather than  
"per mile."

San Diego will handle interview of Wells  
at once without awaiting further efforts to locate  
his previous signed statement and a new signed  
statement should be obtained at the time of this  
interview. The interview should be handled by an  
experienced and well-qualified agent.

cc: Houston (131-39)

JKP:eep

(5) *JKP*



Tolson \_\_\_\_\_  
Nichols \_\_\_\_\_  
Boardman \_\_\_\_\_  
Belmont \_\_\_\_\_  
Mohr \_\_\_\_\_  
Parsons \_\_\_\_\_  
Rosen \_\_\_\_\_  
Tamm \_\_\_\_\_  
Trotter \_\_\_\_\_  
Nease \_\_\_\_\_  
Tele. Room \_\_\_\_\_  
Holloman \_\_\_\_\_  
Gandy \_\_\_\_\_

MAIL ROOM

64 JAN 30 1958

F B I

Date: January 27, 1958

Transmit the following in \_\_\_\_\_

(Type in plain text or code)

AIRTEL

AIRMAIL

Via \_\_\_\_\_

(Priority or Method of Mailing)

TO: DIRECTOR, FBI (131-363)

FROM: SAC HOUSTON (131-39)

SUBJECT: SS WILSON B. KEENE;  
 SS HIGHFLYER;  
 SS GRANDCAMP, ADMIRALTY  
 NUMBERS, 1868, 1869, 1870  
 ADMIRALTY MATTER  
 OO: Houston

Enclosed herewith for the Bureau, San Antonio, and Dallas, is one photostatic copy of a letter received from Mr. JAMES E. ROSS, Assistant United States Attorney, Houston, Texas, on January 24, 1958, requesting additional investigation in this matter.

Dallas: Reinterview MRS. LOUISE REESBY in connection with interview of this individual on 11/18/57, as requested by Mr. JAMES E. ROSS in attached letter.

San Antonio, at Brownsville, Texas: Will reinterview ARTHUR CLARK as requested by the Department. It should be noted that ARTHUR CLARK is employed at Room 406, Pan American Building, 11th and Elizabeth Streets, Brownsville, Texas, and resides at 344 East 9th Street, Brownsville, Texas.

③ - Bureau (Encl. 1) (AM)  
 2 - Dallas (131-7) (Encl. 1) (AM)  
 2 - San Antonio (131-5) (Encl. 1) (AM)  
 1 - Houston

JJD/mfh  
 (8)

RECORDED-18

EX-112 JAN 29 1958

ENCLOSURE

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_ Sent: \_\_\_\_\_ M Per: \_\_\_\_\_

Special Agent in Charge

64 JAN 31 1958

ENCLOSURE: TO BUREAU: (10)

One Photostatic copy of letter  
dated 1/23/58, from AUSA JAMES E. ROSS.

BUfile: 131-363  
HOfile: 131-39



ENCLOSURE

131-265-79

# FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Reporting Office <b>MOBILE</b>	Office of Origin <b>HOUSTON</b>	Date <b>1/31/58</b>	Investigative Period <b>1/30, 31/58</b>
TITLE OF CASE  <b>SS WILSON B. KEENE; SS HIGHFLYER; SS GRANDCAMP Limitation of Liability, April 16 and 17, 1947; Petitions of Lykes Brothers Steamship Company and Republic of France 1868, 1869 and 1870</b>		Report made by <b>R. GERARD ROBINSON</b>	Typed By: <b>Amd</b>
		CHARACTER OF CASE  <b>ADMIRALTY MATTERS</b>	

Synopsis:

*PG*  
CECIL HOWARD WILLIAMS located McIntosh, Ala. Statement previously furnished by WILLIAMS reviewed with him. WILLIAMS did not observe activities of French master or crew aboard SS GRANDCAMP. WILLIAMS recalled guards stationed on dock side of GRANDCAMP. He did not receive instructions re smoking aboard ship and it was common practice of longshoremen to smoke while loading ship.

- RUC -

DETAILS: AT McINTOSH, ALABAMA

Approved <i>PA</i>	Special Agent In Charge	Do not write in spaces below	
Copies made:  <b>② - Bureau (131-363) (AM)</b> <b>2 - Houston (131-39)</b> <b>1 - Mobile (131-33)</b>	<b>131-363-81</b>		<b>RECORDED - 91</b>
	<b>EX - 126</b>		
	<b>11 FEB 3 1958</b>		

*cc Dale Green  
Civil Div 2/4/58  
JW*

*RECORDED  
EX-126  
11 FEB 3 1958  
JW*

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
INTERVIEW REPORT

January 31, 1958

CECIL HOWARD WILLIAMS was located at his place of employment, Brown and Root, Incorporated, McIntosh, Alabama. WILLIAMS advised he is presently residing in care of General Delivery, Calvert, Alabama, but expects to complete the construction work in McIntosh in approximately 30 days. After that time he will be assigned to another construction job by his employer and he is certain that he can be located in the future through the Brown and Root home office in Houston, Texas.

The contents of the signed statement previously furnished to the FBI by WILLIAMS concerning his knowledge of activities aboard the SS GRANDCAMP prior to the explosion aboard the ship on April 16, 1947, were thoroughly reviewed with WILLIAMS and he recalled that he had furnished this statement to Agents of the FBI.

WILLIAMS advised that he cannot recall any activities pertaining to the members of the French crew aboard the GRANDCAMP and stated that he did not recall seeing the French master while he was loading the ship. WILLIAMS continued that it was common practice for longshoremen loading the GRANDCAMP to smoke. WILLIAMS stated that he had never received any instructions that it was not permissible to smoke while loading fertilizer on the ship and knew of no other longshoreman who had received any instructions that smoking was not permitted. WILLIAMS did recall that there were watchmen stationed on the dock next to the GRANDCAMP, but did not observe any guards on board the ship. He stated that to the best of his knowledge the guards never stopped any of the longshoremen from smoking and the guards would have observed longshoremen boarding the ship with lighted cigarettes. WILLIAMS continued that he did not observe any of the French crew drinking and had no knowledge that there was a wine closet in Hold #4 where he had been loading fertilizer. WILLIAMS stated that the only item he loaded aboard the GRANDCAMP was fertilizer, and he did not have any

- 2 -

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Interview with CECIL HOWARD WILLIAMS File # 131-33

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on 1/31/58 at McIntosh, Alabama :Dictated - 1/31/58

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by Special Agent R. GERARD ROBINSON :Amd

MO 131-33

knowledge that there was any other cargo being loaded aboard the ship. He was specifically questioned concerning the loading of ammunition aboard the GRANDCAMP, and stated that he had never, during his period of employment as a longshoreman, ever loaded any ship with ammunition and to the best of his knowledge, the GRANDCAMP took on only fertilizer on April 15 and 16, 1947. WILLIAMS advised that the material loaded on the ship was commonly referred to as fertilizer and he could not recall anyone referring to the material as nitrate. WILLIAMS was certain that he loaded fertilizer into Hold #4 and had not been in Hold #3 during the loading of the GRANDCAMP.

WILLIAMS continued that he has never been interviewed by anyone other than Agents of the FBI concerning his activities on board the GRANDCAMP or in the dock area near the ship prior to the explosion. WILLIAMS advised that he would be willing, if subpoenaed, to go to Galveston, Texas, to testify in any forthcoming hearings in connection with the explosion of the SS GRANDCAMP.

- R U C -

## Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : DIRECTOR, FBI (131-363)

DATE: 1/31/58

FROM : SAC, MOBILE (131-33)

SUBJECT: SS WILSON B. KEENE; SS HIGHFLYER;  
SS GRANDCAMP, Limitation of Liability,  
4/16, 17/47; Petitions of Lykes Brothers  
Steamship Co. and Republic of France  
1868, 1869 and 1870  
ADMIRALTY MATTERS  
(Houston-00)

Enclosed herewith is report of SA R. GERARD ROBINSON dated 1/31/58, at Mobile, and also letterhead memorandum pertaining to CECIL HOWARD WILLIAMS.

Also enclosed herewith to Houston by registered mail is signed statement furnished by CECIL HOWARD WILLIAMS 3/12/48, at Texas City, Texas.

ADMINISTRATIVEREFERENCE

Houston airtel to Bureau 1/28/58.

EX-126 ~~EX-126~~ 91

② - Bureau (131-363) (Enclos. 4)  
 2 - Houston (131-39) (Enclos. 5) (REGISTERED)  
 1 - Mobile (131-33)  
 RGR: Amd  
 (5)

RECORDED - 91 1/31-363-82

EX-126

11 FEB 3 1958

64 FEB 7 1958

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

In Reply, Please Refer to  
File No.

Mobile, Alabama  
January 31, 1958

CECIL HOWARD WILLIAMS

On January 31, 1958, CECIL HOWARD WILLIAMS was interviewed at his place of employment, Brown and Root, Incorporated, McIntosh, Alabama. WILLIAMS was dressed in work clothes since he is employed as a cement helper, but appeared clean shaven and generally neat despite the type of work he was doing. WILLIAMS advised that he has an 8th grade education and although somewhat reserved, appeared to express himself intelligently.

WILLIAMS stated that he has never testified in court, but it appears that he would make a satisfactory witness for the Government.

See Dale Green 1/4/58  
Civil Div BSM JPL

131-363-82

ENCLOSURE

# FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Reporting Office <b>DALLAS, TEXAS</b>	Office of Origin <b>HOUSTON</b>	Date <b>1/31/58</b>	Investigative Period <b>1/30, 31/58</b>
TITLE OF CASE <b>SS WILSON B. KEENE; SS HIGHFLYER; SS GRANDCAMP; Limitation of Liability, April 16 and 17, 1947; Petitions of Lykes Brothers Steamship Company and Republic of France, Southern Texas Admiralty Numbers 1868, 1869, 1870</b>		Report made by <b>B. TOM CARTER</b>	Initials <b>tdsb sss jm</b>
		CHARACTER OF CASE <b>ADMIRALTY MATTERS</b>	

Synopsis:

Mrs. LOUISE REESBY, Fort Worth, Texas, does not recall seeing any correspondence, prior to the explosion, from or to the French Supply Counsel in which the commodity was designated as ammonium nitrate or ammonium nitrate fertilizer. However, she believes the ocean bills of lading prepared by her company (J. D. LATTA) for the French Supply Counsel listed the commodity on the GRANDCAMP and other French ships which were loaded prior to the explosion as ammonium nitrate fertilizer.

- RUC -

## DETAILS:

Approved <i>ON</i>	Special Agent In Charge	Do not write in spaces below	
Copies made:  <b>② - Bureau (131-363) (AM)</b> <b>1 - USA, Houston</b> <b>3 - Houston (131-39)</b> <b>1 - Dallas (131-7)</b>	<b>131-363-83</b> <b>6 FEB 3 1958</b> <b>RECORDED</b>		

*cc Dale Green  
Civil Div BSM  
131-3-58 JHP*

67  
Property of FBI. This report is loaned to you by the FBI, and neither it nor its contents are to be distributed outside the agency to which loaned.

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
INTERVIEW REPORT

Date: 1/31/58

Mrs. HARRY (LOUISE) REESBY, 3965 Wedgway Drive, Ft. Worth, Texas, on January 30, 1958, stated her memory is not good, but she believes she knew prior to the explosion that the cargo on board the GRANDCAMP and the HIGHFLYER was ammonium nitrate fertilizer. She does not recall prior to the explosion of seeing any specific correspondence with the French Supply Counsel, either incoming or outgoing, in which the commodity was referred to as ammonium nitrate or ammonium nitrate fertilizer. She does not recall the ship LT. J. LEMUR or the ship SS ARGHATAM. She does not recall any ocean bills of lading for either of those two ships. She stated she does not recall any changes in the designation of the commodity on board the GRANDCAMP and the HIGHFLYER from what it had previously been carried. At this time she cannot recall whether it was carried on the ocean bills of lading as ammonium nitrate or ammonium nitrate fertilizer but believes it was carried as ammonium nitrate fertilizer. She stated the J. D. LATTA company, for about two years prior to the explosion, had handled several shipments of ammonium nitrate fertilizer for the French Supply Counsel.

Mrs. REESBY stated the ammonium nitrate fertilizer was shipped into Texas City, Texas, from two or three different Army depots (names and locations not recalled) and on the Government bills of lading she believes the consignee was the French Supply Counsel, c/o J. D. LATTA. Her company (J. D. LATTA) prepared the ocean bills of lading after the ship was loaded. She stated the ocean bills of lading were prepared on information furnished by the shipper, which in this case would have been the French Supply Counsel, whose offices were in New York City. Occasionally her company received telephonic instructions from the shippers. Usually such calls were handled by the manager, Mr. ARTHUR CLARK. She does not recall any such calls from the French Supply Counsel.

Mrs. REESBY declined to furnish a signed statement for the reason that her memory was too hazy about the matters discussed in this interview. She stated she would be willing to testify to the statements set out in this interview.

-END-

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Interview with Mrs. HARRY (LOUISE) REESBY File # 131-7  
on 1/30/58 at Ft. Worth, Texas (1/31/58)  
by Special Agent B. TOM CARTER (dab)

## Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : DIRECTOR, FBI (131-363) DATE: 1/31/58

FROM : SAC, DALLAS (131-7)

SUBJECT: SS WILSON B. KEENE;  
SS HIGHFLYER; SS GRANDCAMP,  
Limitation of Liability,  
April 16, and 17, 1947;  
Petitions of Lykes Brothers  
Steamship Company and Republic  
of France, Southern Texas  
Admiralty Numbers 1868, 1869, 1870  
ADMIRALTY MATTERS

(OO: HO)

Enclosed herewith is report of SA B. TOM CARTER,  
dated 1/31/58, at Dallas.

## REFERENCE

Houston airtel to Bureau, 1/27/58.

2 - Bureau (Encls. 2) (AM)  
3 - Houston (131-39)  
1 - Dallas  
BTC: jm  
(6)(rd)

RECORDED. 11

131-363-84

• FEB 3 1958

67 - 138

## Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO: DIRECTOR, FBI (131-363)

DATE: JAN 31 1958

FROM: SAC, HOUSTON (131-39)

SUBJECT: SS WILSON B. KEENE;  
SS HIGH FLYER;  
SS GRANDCAMP; ADMIRALTY NUMBERS  
1868, 1869, 1870  
ADMIRALTY MATTER  
OO: Houston

E

Enclosed herewith for the Bureau are two copies of the report of SA JOSEPH J. DOOLING, dated JAN 31 1958, at Houston, as well as twelve copies of blank memoranda dated JAN 31 1958, at Houston.

LEADSHOUSTON:AT HOUSTON, TEXAS:

1. Will contact Mr. JAMES E. ROSS, AUSA, Houston, to ascertain if he now desires any additional investigation concerning the article appearing in the Houston Press on May 2, 1947.

2. Will ascertain from Mr. JAMES E. ROSS when he desires the interviews which, he, on 1/14/58 requested be held in abeyance as set forth in report of SA JOSEPH J. DOOLING, dated JAN 31 1958, at Houston.

3. Will at the Customs House in Houston and Galveston determine the names of the vessel, owners, local agents, and captains of the vessel which transported ammonium nitrate from the Ports of Houston and Texas City during the period of April, 1945 to April, 1947.

Q - Bureau (Encls. 14)  
Q - Houston

RECORDED-18

EX-135

FEB 5 1958

50 JJD/mfh  
(4)

ENCLOSURE

6 FEB 7 1958

242pcls 8 PAB  
2/5/58  
EDH/leg.

FEB 11 1958

P. O. G.

HO 131-39

4. Will during the course of this aforementioned investigation ascertain the name of the captain of the SS LT. J. LE MOUR. It should be noted that this vessel loaded ammonium nitrate in Texas City some time during the first part of April, 1947, and their record of cargo and clearance was found in the Customs House in Galveston. (This investigation was requested by AUSA JAMES E. ROSS, Houston, by communication dated 1/20/58.)

5. Will conduct investigation at Saybolt Laboratories as requested by Mr. JAMES E. ROSS.

6. Will conduct investigation at the Houston Fire Department as requested by Mr. JAMES E. ROSS, in his letter dated 1/23/58.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Houston, Texas

[JAN 31 1958]

In Reply, Please Refer to  
File No.

Re: SS WILSON B. KEENE;  
SS HIGHFLYER;  
SS GRANDCAMP; ADMIRALTY NUMBERS  
1868, 1869, 1870  
ADMIRALTY MATTER

EARL B. LEE, who resides at 500 Wisteria, La Marque, Texas, is employed as an operator at Carbide Carbon Chemical Corporation, Texas City, Texas. He is 35 years old, married, and the father of three children. LEE presents a good physical appearance. Although his formal education is lacking, he can effectively express himself in a homespun manner.

LEE appears to possess simple honesty to a great degree. It is believed he would be a good witness.

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131-363-86  
ENCLOSURE



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

In Reply, Please Refer to  
File No.

Houston, Texas

JAN 31 1958

Re: SS WILSON B. KEENE;  
SS HIGH FLYER;  
SS GRANDCAMP; ADMIRALTY NUMBERS  
1868, 1869, 1870  
ADMIRALTY MATTER

JOYCE THOMAS FRENCH is 28 years of age, married, and has two children. He makes a good appearance, is neat, and speaks intelligently. He seemed hesitant to admit that the longshoreman smoked in the hold of the ship due to the fact that if he testified in Court to this the general public might gain an unfavorable impression of him. He was very young at the time of the explosion and did not concern himself with detail and had to have his memory refreshed as to the smoking, etc.

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

In Reply, Please Refer to  
File No.

Houston, Texas

JAN 31 1958

Re: SS WILSON B. KEENE;  
SS HIGH FLYER;  
SS GRANDCAMP; ADMIRALTY NUMBERS  
1868, 1869, 1870  
ADMIRALTY MATTER

E. J. STINSON is married and resides at 3824 North One Half Street, Galveston, Texas, with his family. Mr. STINSON's right arm had been amputated below the elbow. This apparently occurred after it had no connection with the explosion as he made no claim for damages. Mr. STINSON had a limited knowledge of the explosion but he presented an honest approach and would probably make a good witness. He was not too sure of his answers but just raised the knowledge of the events leading to the explosion.

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In Reply, Please Refer to  
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Houston, Texas

JAN 31 1958

Re: SS WILSON B. KEENE;  
SS HIGH FLYER;  
SS GRANDCAMP; ADMIRALTY NUMBERS  
1868, 1869, 1870  
ADMIRALTY MATTER

JAMES WILBURN NEWLIN flatly stated that he did not care to be a witness for the U. S. Government during accompanying trial. He said that he was severely injured during the explosion and for a period of approximately ten months he was unable to work and care for himself. He said he received a small settlement from the Government which was wholly inadequate and did not cover the complete cost of his injuries. He is very embittered toward the Government regarding the Texas City explosion and would not make a good witness.

NEWLIN stated that if it was absolutely necessary and there was no way for him to avoid being a witness, then he would consent to be interviewed and would appear in Court as a witness.

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In Reply, Please Refer to  
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Houston, Texas

JAN 31 1958

Re: SS WILSON B. KEENE;  
SS HIGH FLYER;  
SS GRANDCAMP; ADMIRALTY NUMBERS  
1868, 1869, 1870  
ADMIRALTY MATTER

NEAL CURTIS CLOUD is 62 years old, married, and presently resides with his wife. Mr. CLOUD is very careful in trying to tell the truth as he says other men who gave statements made false statements as they were trying to recover damages. He has a special impediment in that he hesitates after beginning to speak in groping for the next words. He was employed in a position of picking up paper around the construction job and did not seem to possess a high intelligence. He had a hard time recalling the facts unless his memory was refreshed from the signed statement.

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

In Reply, Please Refer to  
File No.

Houston, Texas

JAN 31 1958

Re: SS WILSON B. KEENE;  
SS HIGH FLYER;  
SS GRANDCAMP; ADMIRALTY NUMBERS  
1868, 1869, 1870  
ADMIRALTY MATTER

HENRY WILLIE DAVID is approximately 43 years of age, married, and living in moderate circumstances with his family. Mr. DAVID possessed a good memory, understood the operation well, and was very sure of himself when he answered the questions. Mr. DAVID lost several close friends in the explosion and witnessed the terrible devastation of it and for this reason has unpleasant memories which he is hesitant to talk about.

DAVID presented the appearance of a working man and should make a good witness.

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JAN 31 1958

Re: SS WILSON B. KEENE;  
SS HIGHFLYER;  
SS GRANDCAMP; ADMIRALTY NUMBERS  
1868, 1869, 1870  
ADMIRALTY MATTER

WILLIAM RICHARD LONG is married and is self-employed in the operation of a dairy. He is the only person presently working at the dairy and for this reason would not be available until after ten o'clock in the morning to testify. He stated that he begins the evening milking at approximately four o'clock. He asked that if he were called to testify it could be within the hours 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM for the above reason.

Mr. LONG's recollections of the explosion were hazy in that he did not recall several of the incidents such as smoking, etc. His information was very limited which might be attributed to the fact that although he is willing to testify if called, he would prefer not to testify since he must take care of the dairy farm by himself. He speaks with sincerity and average intelligence and his testimony would probably be well received.

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In Reply, Please Refer to  
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Houston, Texas

JAN 31 1958

Re: SS WILSON B. KEENE;  
SS HIGHFLYER;  
SS GRANDCAMP; ADMIRALTY NUMBERS  
1868, 1869, 1870  
ADMIRALTY MATTER

JESSE L. NEWLIN is a man of approximately 38 years of age. He is married but his wife is presently residing in Dallas, Texas. NEWLIN is approximately six feet and is of average build. NEWLIN was recovering from a short illness when interviewed and was unshaven and did not present a good physical appearance. NEWLIN remembered the events leading to the explosion exceptionally well.

Due to his capacity of his being foreman of the crew loading hold #2, he seems to be in a position of having quite a bit of information regarding the loading of the nitrate. Aside from his physical appearance he would probably make an excellent witness.

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

In Reply, Please Refer to  
File No.

Houston, Texas

1 JAN 31 1958

Re: SS WILSON B. KEENE;  
SS HIGH FLYER;  
SS GRANDCAMP; ADMIRALTY NUMBERS  
1868, 1869, 1870  
ADMIRALTY MATTER

JOHN W. BURNS is a man of 46 years of age, is married and resides with his wife. He is approximately six feet one inch, medium build, ruddy complexion, with outdoor even features. He is credible and would make an average witness.

It should be noted, however, that in attempting to locate this man, his wife advised that he spends his evenings at various bars on Texas Avenue and that he was known in all the bars and the best way to find him was to make inquiries in these cafes. As a result of such an investigation he was located.

At the time of his interview it was obvious that he had recently partaken of intoxicants.

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Houston, Texas

JAN 31 1958

In Reply, Please Refer to  
File No.

Re: SS WILSON B. KEENE;  
SS HIGH FLYER;  
SS GRANDCAMP; ADMIRALTY NUMBERS  
1868, 1869, 1870  
ADMIRALTY MATTER

ALFRED MANIS is a man of approximately 55 to 60 years of age, being about 5' 7" in height, and very slender build. His right eye is missing. MANIS is very positive in any statements he makes and is straightforward in such statements. He is credible; however, many times he can not reconcile different statements made by him on the same point.

Considering his age and infirmities, he would make a very good witness provided he did not contradict himself.

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Houston, Texas

JAN 31 1958

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Re: SS WILSON B. KEENE;  
SS HIGH FLYER;  
SS GRANDCAMP; ADMIRALTY NUMBERS  
1868, 1869, 1870  
ADMIRALTY MATTER

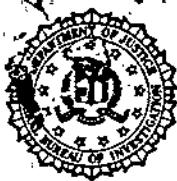
BYARD MOORE is a 41 year old white male, who is presently employed as a mechanic and assistant service manager of the Farm and Ranch Equipment Company. He has advised he completed the ninth grade in school and he appears to be a man of average intelligence. MOORE presents a good appearance and appears to express himself in an acceptable manner.

It is believed that MOORE will make an average witness in the event he is called to testify, since some of the information furnished in his statement was not clear in his mind at the time of interview, and it was necessary to go over this statement with MOORE in detail.

131-363-85

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
Houston, Texas

In Reply, Please Refer to  
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JAN 31 1958

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SS HIGH FLYER;  
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1868, 1869, 1870  
ADMIRALTY MATTER

JAMES J. TROTTER is a man of approximately 31 years of age. He is extremely neat for a man working in a chemical plant. He is a good dresser and extremely friendly. His entire appearance, including his teeth and hair, is meticulously clean and well kept which, with his ruddy complexion, gives him a very attractive appearance. He expresses himself in a clear concise manner and is very credible.

TROTTER would appear to make an excellent witness.

131-363-85

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# FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Reporting Office HOUSTON	Office of Origin HOUSTON	Date JAN 31 1953	Investigative Period 12/9, 12, 13, 17, 20, 30, 31; 1/3, 5, 9, 10, 14-
TITLE OF CASE <i>M</i> SS WILSON B. KEENE; SS HIGHFLYER; SS GRANDCAMP; ADMIRALTY NUMBERS 1868, 1869, 1870		Report made by JOSEPH J. DOOLING	Typed By mfh
		CHARACTER OF CASE <i>M</i> ADMIRALTY MATTER	

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### Synopsis

Mrs. L. D. FARROW, Port Arthur, Texas, former clerical employee of J. D. LATTA interviewed. ALVA PHELPS and GAILE LEONARD STEINBACH now dead. CLARENCE HENRY WELLS residing National City, California. COP RANKIN LUBBOCK DeWALT, NA, and J. D. LATTA, Medina, Texas, interviewed as requested by Department. SA MURRY C. FALKNER presently in Mobile. ALFRED MANIS who heard two explosions on the GrandCamp now in Texas City. MARVIN SPENCER is in Texas City.

- P -

**DETAILS:**

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re correction  
line 1, approx. +  
line 2, approx. -  
but line 3, approx. 0  
2/14/58 JKL

Approved	<i>bx</i>	Special Agent in Charge	Do not write in spaces below	
Copies made:				
② Bureau (131-53) 1 - USA, Houston 2 - Houston (131-39)			131-363-86 EX-126	RECORDED-13
			17 FEB 1958	

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Ice Dale <sup>Green</sup> Civil Div 24/58  
PSM JMF

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62 FEB 10 1958

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
INTERVIEW REPORT

Date: January 27, 1958

On January 10, 1958, Mrs. L. D. (DOROTHY) FARROW, nee CARTER, 5125 9th Street, Port Arthur, Texas, advised that she was employed by J. D. LATTA COMPANY, Galveston, Texas, from March, 1945, until December, 1948. She stated that her job was that of a clerk-typist-secretary but that she did general office work which at times consisted of typing ocean bills of lading.

Mrs. FARROW advised that she recalls typing ocean bills of lading covering shipments of ammonium nitrate including some of the ocean bills of lading covering the shipments of ammonium nitrate on the ships involved in the explosion and fire although she could not recall specifically which ship or ships. She continued that she recalls that on some of the ocean bills of lading prepared in the office of the J. D. Latta Company, covering shipments of ammonium nitrate she was instructed to add the words "oxidizing material" after ammonium nitrate. She stated that she does not recall by whose instructions the words "oxidizing material" were added to some of the invoices. She stated that in making up the ocean bills of lading the instructions of the steamship company handling the shipment were followed, that is, the steamship company furnished the information to go on the ocean bill of lading and so far as she knows no one in the office had authority to add to or delete from the information furnished by the steamship company.

Mrs. FARROW advised that she does not recall seeing any correspondence indicating that ammonium nitrate was dangerous.

She related that so far as she knows the only connection J. D. LATTA had with E. S. Binnings & Company and the petitioners or other agents was purely a business connection.

Mrs. FARROW advised that she left the company in 1948, prior to the time the company closed at Galveston and that she does not have any knowledge of the disposition of the

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Interview with MRS. L. D. (DOROTHY) FARROW, nee CARTER File # HO 131-39

on 1/10/58 at Port Arthur, Texas Date Dictated: 1/13/58

by Special Agent WILLIAM J. SCHMIDT:mfh

HO 133-39

of the records of the company. She further advised that her job with J. D. LATTA was that of clerical employee and that she is not familiar with the over-all operation of the company. She advised that the information furnished by her is as she recalls it and would have no way of supporting the statements made and for that reason did not wish to furnish a signed statement in the matter.

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
INTERVIEW REPORT

Date: January 27, 1958

Mrs. FLORA ALLEN, 2112 Fourth Avenue North, Texas City, Texas, advised that she was formerly married to ALVA PHELPS. ALVA PHELPS was killed in an automobile accident in April, 1948, and she, Mrs. ALLEN, has since remarried.

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Interview with MRS. FLORA ALLEN File # HO 131-39  
on 1/21/58 at Texas City, Texas Dictated: 1/22/58  
by Special Agent: JOSEPH J. DOOLING:mfh

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
INTERVIEW REPORT

Date: January 24, 1958

Mrs. WILLIE MAE ACRE, 721 - 20th Avenue North, was interviewed at her husband's place of business, Ford-Acre Garage, Ninth Street North, Texas City. She stated that she is a sister of CLARENCE HENRY WELLS and that he resides at 2948 Ridgeway Drive, National City, California.

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Interview with MRS. WILLIE MAE ACRE File # HO 131-39  
on 1/21/58 at Texas City, Texas Dictated: 1/22/58  
by Special Agent JOSEPH J. DOOLING:mfh

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
INTERVIEW REPORT

Date: January 27, 1958

MRS. F. A. STEINBACH, 2211 Fifth Avenue North, Texas City, Texas, advised that her brother-in-law was GAILE LEONARD STEINBACH. She stated that GAILE LEONARD STEINBACH died several years ago.

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Interview with MRS. F. A. STEINBACH File # HO 131-39  
on 1/9/58 at Texas City, Texas Dictated: 1/22/58  
by Special Agent JOSEPH J. DOOLING:mfh

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
INTERVIEW REPORT

Date: January 27, 1958

RANKIN LUBBOCK DE WALT, (NA), who resides at 812 Seventh Avenue North, Texas City, Texas, was interviewed at his office in the Police Department, Texas City, where he is the Chief of Police.

1. Chief of Police DE WALT reviewed in detail the signed statement which he gave in 1948 in connection with previous investigation in this matter. The following is the copy of that signed statement:

"Texas City, Texas  
March 22, 1948

"I, RANKIN LUBBOCK DeWALT, make the following voluntary statement to Special Agent LEO K. COOK, Federal Bureau of Investigation, knowing that it can be used in court.

"I am employed by the Texas City Terminal Railway Company as Assistant Warehouse Superintendent and have been employed by that company since December 24, 1945. It is my job to supervise all of the work of Texas City Terminal Railway Company employees in the warehouses. This covers the warehouse employees, who are known as irregular employees.

"On April 16, 1957, I arrived on the job at about 7:45 a.m. and went to work at 8:00 a.m. I saw no signs of fire on any ship or any place in the yards and everything appeared normal at that time. On that morning I was supervising the loading of knock-down gondola cars from a stock pile onto freight cars on track 16-1 lead, about 150 yards south of the General Offices.

"Sometime around 8:20 a.m. I heard a ship's whistle blow several times, which attracted my attention, and I looked in the direction that the sound came from and could see smoke, but could not tell where the smoke

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Interview with RANKIN LUBBOCK DE WALT File # HO 131-39  
on 1/16/58 at Texas City, Texas Date Dictated: 1/22/58

by Special Agent JOSEPH J. DOOLING:mfh

"was coming from. About five minutes later I heard a fire siren blow. I stayed on the job for a few minutes more and then got into my car and drove to the wharf master's office, opposite warehouse B, where I met A. C. LOPER, a timekeeper, and asked him where the fire was, and he told me it was on the GrandCamp. I talked to him for a couple of minutes and then drove back to where my men were working and was there when the ship blew up. I don't know exactly what time it was, but it was somewhere around 9 o'clock.

"I heard two explosions, the first being the smaller of the two. These seemed to be from five to ten seconds apart and between the two I crawled into an opening under some of the stacked car parts and was not injured by the explosion. After stuff stopped falling I crawled out but could not see much because it was hazy and dusty. But a short time later I could see that some of the oil tanks at the Humble Tank Farm were afire and that there was also fire in the direction of the Monsanto plant, but I could not tell all that was burning. I left the area as soon as possible. At the time of the explosion of the High Flyer I was on my way back to Texas City from Houston.

"I had nothing to do with the loading of fertilizer on either the GrandCamp or the High Flyer and did not know anything about the cause of the fire or explosion on either ship.

"I supervised the men who unloaded fertilizer from box cars into the warehouses but they were under the immediate supervision of the walking foremen, who in turn were under my supervision. The fertilizer when it was received, was unloaded from the cars into the warehouses as soon as possible after it arrived in the Terminal Company yards. I do not have any independent recollection of the fertilizer that was in warehouse 0 or which went on the GrandCamp or High Flyer, but I would say from experience that it was unloaded from the cars into the warehouse within a day or so of the time it arrived at Texas City.

"The fertilizer came packed 800 or 1000 bags to a car and there were always some bags in each car that

"were torn or broken. Some cars might have one or two bags while others might have as many as twenty. Usually a majority of the broken bags would be in the doorway, where the door would catch them when being opened or closed. Such broken or torn bags were always set aside and re-bagged before they were stacked into the warehouse. Extra bags came with each car and there was usually an extra man who was a sweeper and whose job it was to shovel up the spilled fertilizer and re-bag it into the extra bags. Sometimes there would be no extra man for this job and in those cases somebody in the gang would act as sweeper. So far as I know, there were no exceptions to this procedure and no broken or torn bags were stacked into the warehouse.

"When cars were first opened there would be heat in them and the bags would be warm, even those around the sides of the car. But the heat would be less after the car was open a while and I never heard of any bags being too warm to be handled with bare hands.

"This fertilizer was packed in medium brown paper bags that I think were six-ply and each bag weighed 100 pounds. Sometimes some of the bags would be a darker brown where they had gotten wet. These seemed to be around the doorway and may have gotten wet from rain leaking in or from evaporation of the fertilizer. Some of the bags that broke were brittle and looked like they were scorched, but I do not know what caused this. As best I recall, each of the bags said Fertilizer, Ammonium Nitrate and 32% on it and some other writing that I do not recall.

"This stuff was usually referred to by the men as fertilizer, but was sometimes called nitrate. I was never told anything about the nature of nitrate or this fertilizer and never was told exactly what it was. I had never been told that it was or was not dangerous, or that it would or would not burn or explode. I did not consider it dangerous. I never got or gave any instructions that it required

"any particular handling other than care not to break the bags. It was handled just like flour or any other cargo.

"No smoking was allowed on the docks or in the warehouses. I received an Office Memorandum from the general offices about cautioning the men against smoking and I had been told by my superior, BILL FUNKLING, from time to time to have the foremen tell the men not to smoke. I passed these orders on to all of the foremen under me. In addition, there were 'No Smoking' signs in the warehouses and on the docks and patrolmen were on duty and it was part of their duty to see that the men did not smoke. I cannot recall ever having seen anyone smoking on the docks or in the warehouses and never heard of anyone smoking in these areas and therefore, did not know of any case in which disciplinary action was ever taken for a violation of the No Smoking rules.

"I have read this statement consisting of two and one-fourth pages and it is all true to the best of my knowledge and belief. I have signed my name to each page.

"/s/ Signed RANKIN L. DeWALT

"WITNESSED:

"/s/ LEO K. COOK, FBI."

At that same time Mr. DE WALT reviewed in detail the information which he supplied to Special Agents LEO K. COOK and ROY T. NOONAN, on March 25, 1948. That information is set out verbatim:

Reference is made to report of information concerning statements relative to the possibility of tin ore having been located in some of the warehouses at Texas City Terminal so as to possibly contaminate the fertilizer.

On March 24, 1948, Special Agents LEO K. COOK and ROY T. NOONAN re-interviewed RANKIN LUBBOCK DeWALT, 810

Sixth Avenue, North, Texas City, Texas, who was Assistant Warehouse Superintendent at the time of the disaster. Mr. DeWALT stated that a considerable quantity of tin ore was handled through the Texas City port, and that this came in by boat. This was in bags and the longshoremen would take it off the boats, load it on trays, and it would then be unloaded and stored in the warehouse. Thereafter it was loaded out on flat cars and transported to the tin smelter in Texas City. The bags were marked as to grade, etc., and a representative of the tin smelter would be on hand to select the grades of ore that were desired on any particular day. This representative was EDWARD GEHLANT.

Mr. DeWALT stated that this tin ore came in finely woven burlap bags, the smaller bags usually being the more finely woven and containing the finer ore. The small bags weighed from seventy to eighty pounds, and the large bags would be from ninety to one hundred pounds. They were nothing like the fertilizer bags. Some of the bags were very dark brown and others were more of a lighter color. Some of the bags occasionally would have a red appearance from the ore. Some of the ore was like flour, or powdered something like fertilizer. Other grades would be in little junks about as big as the ends of ones fingers, while other grades would be like ground coffee. These bags were handled and tossed around rather roughly, and some dust would be caused in the sifting out of loose ore. If any of the bags were broken, the sweeper would clean it up and re-bag it. Some of the fine ore would make quite a dust which, on the occasion of broken sacks, would tend to choke the workers temporarily, but it was very heavy dust and would settle within one or two minutes. There was very little breakage of the sacks, not nearly as much as with fertilizer and flour. The dust would never get outside the warehouse.

Practically all of the tin ore which came into the Texas City port was handled through warehouse B; however, Mr. DeWALT remembers that part of one shipment was stored in warehouse A when warehouse B was full, this being, according to his recollection, probably eight or ten months before the explosion of the Grandcamp. Tin ore was never put in warehouse C or any other warehouse.

Mr. DeWALT further stated that none of the fertilizer was ever handled out of warehouse B, but a small amount was handled out of warehouse A from the east end for one or two shipments. Tin ore and fertilizer were never in any warehouse at the same time. Mr. DeWALT could not recall when fertilizer was ever placed in any warehouse after tin ore had been placed there. He stated that warehouse O was used almost exclusively for fertilizer until the last few months before the explosion, when a shipment of about ten cars was placed in warehouse B.

In warehouse O before the loading of the GrandCamp and during that time there was flour and fertilizer, and in the east end there were some drums of asphalt, some full and some empty. The full ones were in the far corner and had been there since before Mr. DeWALT started to work at the Terminal in December, 1945. He believed that at one time asphalt was loaded out of this port and that this was some left-over amount which had never been moved.

Regarding warehouse O, he stated that there were three sections in this warehouse with seven doors to each section, twenty-one doors in all. There was a fire wall between each section made of brick and cement plaster, and a fire door is located between each section. Fertilizer was in the middle and east section and none of it was in the first or west section of the warehouse at the time of the explosion. As he recalls, there was only flour in the west section.

Mr. DeWALT, upon further questioning, stated that at one time the Republic Oil Refining Company had used the middle section of warehouse O for a barrel house. When they moved out after the War, this reverted back to the Terminal and there were remaining therein from 100 to 150 empty five-gallon olive drab cans, which were stored in a small locker room. Mr. DeWALT stated that the above is all that he can recall being in warehouse O at the time of the explosion, although at one time sugar and some heavy machinery had been handled through this warehouse.

Mr. DeWALT further stated that after the explosion, and he believes it was the following Sunday, he recovered a

partial bag of this fertilizer from the east end of warehouse 0. The warehouse had burned and the east end of this warehouse the day he got this bag was still burning and firemen in the vicinity were using a fire hose. He got this partial bag or sample at the request of Mr. W. H. SANDEBERG, President of the Texas City Terminal Railway Company. Mr. DeWALT walked down near the east end where he stated there were several bags of fertilizer which were torn and spilled, and under some boards were several bags intact. He reached under and pulled on one sack and it tore, but he got about one-half of it and put the bag and the fertilizer in a bucket and gave it to Mr. SANDEBERG.

It was later put in nine one-gallon galvanized cans which Mr. DeWALT had purchased. He purchased twelve such cans and nine were used. He does not know what was done with this fertilizer, but it was put in these cans upon the direction of Mr. SANDEBERG and three or four other men who were with him. There was still some left over, which was in the bucket and he does not know what became of it. He stated he wrote his name and date on the bag when he first recovered it and turned it over to Mr. SANDEBERG. He kept this in his possession, however, until it was taken to the Terminal Company office, where it was placed in a little wooden locker in the Chief Bar Inspector's office, the locker being locked and the key being given to Mr. SANDEBERG. It was a week later, approximately, that the fertilizer was placed in these nine cans and Mr. DeWALT was present at that time. Mr. DeWALT thinks that some of the other men present made notations on the cans. The bag was the same on the day that it was opened and the fertilizer placed in these cans as the day Mr. DeWALT recovered it.

Regarding the rest of the fertilizer which was still in warehouse 0 after the explosion and after the fire, Mr. DeWALT does not know what was done with this, but he believes that it was probably washed off the dock by the fire hose or removed by the Coast Guard and he does not know of anyone else who got any of this. He could not recall what printing or writing was still on this sack that he recovered.

Chief of Police DeWALT stated that the information previously given to him is correct and that he is now verifying that information to the FBI.

2a. Chief of Police DeWALT stated that he was never aboard the GrandCamp and therefore could not have any knowledge as to the smoking on the deck, around the hatches, or in the holds by the French crew.

2b. See 2a.

2c. See 2a.

Chief of Police DeWALT stated that he did smoke at the time of the explosion and that the closest he ever came to the GrandCamp was at one time he walked down the apron of the pier next to the GrandCamp; however, the Terminal Company had a "No Smoking" rule in the immediate area of the warehouse and piers and as a matter of fact the No Smoking area included that area east of the road which road starts at the Sea Train docks, therefore, in effect, there was no smoking from the entrance road to the turning basin which included piers, wharves, access roads, vessels, etc.

2d. See 2a.

Chief of Police DeWALT stated that the smoking rules aboard the vessel as to particular areas of that vessel would be up to the captain of any given vessel.

2e. Chief of Police DeWALT stated that he has no knowledge as to the demeanor of the French crew and the master. He was never aboard the vessel, he never met the captain and he never met any of the crew members.

2f. Chief of Police DeWALT has no knowledge as to combustible materials being stored in the same hold as ammonium nitrate.

2g. Chief of Police DeWALT stated that the ammonium nitrate was commonly known as fertilizer by the men in the deck area but he personally knew that it contained ammonium nitrate as it was so labeled on the bags.

2h & i. Chief of Police DeWALT has no knowledge of the ammunition or acids aboard the vessel as he never was aboard.

3. Chief of Police DeWALT stated that he would be glad to testify for the Federal Government in accordance with the information he has given in his signed statement, the oral interview in 1948, and the present information.

4. Chief of Police DeWALT stated that after reading the signed statement and oral interview over, these facts come back to his memory. He stated that as he recalls he has a copy of the signed statement previously set out in this report. He will attempt to search his home for this copy and again refresh his memory on these points. He requested that if possible a copy of the information reported in the oral interview on March 24, 1948, be furnished him.

5. Chief of Police DeWALT stated that he has been interviewed on various occasions about the Texas City matter but he is sure he has not been interviewed in the last five years except in connection with a Senate committee hearing having to do with the claims paid by the Government in this matter. He stated that he will gladly travel to Galveston, Texas, to testify.

6. Chief of Police DeWALT stated that he never saw anyone smoking in the prohibited area. He stated that had he ever found anyone smoking he would have turned him over to the local police. He also doubted that anyone would have smoked in his presence because they were probably aware of what his action would have been at that time considering his position. DeWALT stated that it is opinion there are city ordinances which cover smoking rules in dock areas. He stated that he was in the immediate area at the time of the explosion and about 45 minutes after the GrandCamp explosion, he left that area. He never returned to the immediate ship area from that time until after the second explosion.

On December 30, 1957, Assistant United States Attorney JAMES E. ROSS advised that they anticipated using testimony of MAURICE DE BROZEC. Mr. ROSS stated that there is a possibility in the opinion of Mr. DALE GREEN, Departmental Attorney, and himself that MAURICE DE BROZEC may contend that he did not understand the interpreter or that the interpreter did not understand DE BROZEC. Mr. ROSS, therefore, requested that the Bureau ascertain present whereabouts of Special Agent MURRY C. FALKNER, the agent who took this signed statement and acted as interpreter, it being noted DE BROZEC could not speak any English and the interview was conducted in French.

By communication dated January 2, 1958, the Houston Office was advised that Special Agent MURRY C. FALKNER is presently assigned to the Mobile Office.

On December 31, 1957, Mr. JAMES E. ROSS requested that the address of ALFRED MANIS, Box 705, Texas City, Texas, be ascertained in order that a subsequent date could be set so that this individual could be interviewed. It should be noted that this is the individual who told JOE CASH that he heard two explosions one immediately following the other, at the time the GrandCamp exploded. The first explosion, in ALFRED MANIS' opinion, occurred in hold #5 and was followed immediately thereafter by the explosion of hold #4. Incidentally, hold #5 contained ammunition.

On January 3, 1958, Mrs. JOE MANIS, 2331 Sixth Avenue North, Texas City, Texas, advised she is the daughter-in-law of ALFRED MANIS who resides at 2324 Seventh Avenue North. She stated, however, that she did not feel it is desirable to interview him at that time inasmuch as he was at home sick possibly with a bad cold or flu.

On January 16, 1958, Assistant U. S. Attorney JAMES E. ROSS requested that the present addresses of the various BALLEWS previously interviewed in the Texas City disaster case be ascertained. It should be noted that all gave an address of Route 4, Rusk, Texas, in 1948, and that one of the four BALLEWS, that is WILLIAM F. BALLEW, also gave an alternate address of 114 First Avenue North, Texas City, Texas.

On that same date [redacted] advised his records reflect that WILLIAM F. BALLEW did live in Texas City at that address but had moved

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HO 131-39

away some time ago with no forwarding address. He stated his records would not necessarily show when the man left inasmuch as the old address was not cancelled as of a certain date but that apparently it was some years ago and there was a possibility that this man returned to Rusk, Texas, a former address.

On January 16, 1958, Mrs. O. R. BALLEW, 428 Pine, Texas City, Texas, advised that she is not related to WILLIAM F. BALLEW and that she knows of no other such person in the Texas City with that same last name.

On December 30, 1957, Assistant U. S. Attorney JAMES E. ROSS requested that the present whereabouts of MARVIN SPENCER be ascertained.

On January 3, 1958, Mrs. MARVIN SPENCER, 2102 Fourth Avenue North, Texas City, advised her husband no longer works in Harvey, Louisiana. He is now employed out of his home and can be reached at that address. She suggested, however, in view of his odd working hours that she be telephonically contacted to arrange for an interview. Their telephone number is 5-5241.

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
INTERVIEW REPORT

Date: January 28, 1958

Mr. J. D. LATTA was interviewed at his residence on a ranch approximately four miles west of Medina, Texas. Mr. LATTA advised that he can not walk because of his illness and is in a retired status.

Mr. LATTA stated that he handled all shipments for the French Government, Belgium Government, and the Dutch and Portuguese Governments in this connection and had handled ammonium nitrate naturally for the French and approximately 1500 tons for the Dutch Government. He stated that in addition he had handled some shipments for the Italian Government but does not believe they contained ammonium nitrate.

Also in connection with his handling of ammonium nitrate that Pier 15 in Houston, approximately 30,000 tons of ammonium nitrate was handled by him on approximately ten vessels. These shipments commenced in 1946. The French always referred to such shipments as fertilizer and he, LATTA, obtained his description of the cargo from Spencer Chemical or Lion Oil Company. Mr. LATTA repeated that he had never determined what the description of the cargo should have been; he merely copied what was given to him.

In connection with ammonium nitrate LATTA stated that he never heard of any regulations either from the agents for the French company; that is, E. S. Binnings, Lykes Brothers, or the Coast Guard as to the handling of ammonium nitrate, its potential danger, or fighting any such fires. He stated that to his knowledge all of the fires aboard vessels in the Galveston area were cotton fires. His primary source of business concerned cotton and he was not a general shipper of merchandise but more or less specialized in cotton. He stated that cotton fires were primarily fought by covering the hatches and pouring steam into the hold. This, of course, saved the cargo.

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Interview with MR. J. D. LATTAFile # HQ 131-39on 12/9/57 at Medina, TexasDate Dictated: 1/22/58by Special Agent JOSEPH J. DOOLING:mfh

Mr. LATTA stated that prior to the Texas City explosion he never heard of an oxidizing material. He did hear this term, however, from two men of Spencer Chemical Company whose names he can not now recall who flew down to Texas City area after the explosion. He stated that he had never had any ammonium nitrate fire before and that to his knowledge the average man in the dock area only knew how to fight a cotton fire aboard a vessel. Mr. LATTA further stated that he had always considered the captain of the vessel to be responsible for the proper fighting or handling of a fire aboard a vessel.

During the interview Mr. LATTA again stated that he had no authority to change the labeling or description of a cargo. He put it down just as it came to him; therefore, he felt that he would label it exactly as the Government Bill of Lading described the cargo and also as the French issued the shipping instructions. Mr. LATTA stated that in this connection, that is, a description of the cargo, the only thing he now feels he could have done before the explosion ~~but had not known of~~ potential danger, would have to advise the steamship agent. Mr. LATTA stated that he can not see how he was held responsible for any failure in this regard.

Mr. LATTA stated that immediately after ascertaining that a fire was aboard the vessel he called the French Government in New York City. Mr. LATTA explained that he was not in Texas City at that time and did not go there every day but he talked to his employee, Mr. MAJOR, daily and was immediately advised of the fire in this case. LATTA stated that the French did not take the matter seriously at first but called him back about twenty minutes later and said that there were newspaper extras out on the street concerning the explosion. Mr. LATTA confessed that he did not know the extent of the situation on his first call to New York and on their subsequent call to him.

Mr. LATTA stated he immediately proceeded to Texas City and arrived there about one and one-half hours after the explosion.

LATTA stated that he talked to GLADWIN, SR, after the GrandCamp had exploded but before the Highflyer had exploded.

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Their conversation concerned the explosion on the Grandcamp. They both knew in this conversation that the Highflyer had ammonium nitrate aboard; however, neither mentioned any possibility of an explosion on the Highflyer. Mr. LATTA stated that he stayed in Texas City approximately one hour and left the area.

HO 131-39

On January 3, 1958, [redacted]  
[redacted] Texas City, Texas, advised he had ascertained  
that J. J. CORBETT had last known address of Route 5, Box 57,  
Dayton, Texas.

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On January 16, 1958, Mr. JAMES E. ROSS stated that he desired certain interviews be held in abeyance at this time in order to eliminate the possibility of a subsequent interview of the same person at a later date. These individuals are Special Agent MURRY C. FALKNER, Captain ROBERT L. WYNNE, and PETE SUDERMAN. Mr. ROSS stated that he desired no further interviews of the E. C. Binnings company employees.

Mr. ROSS stated that he desired the weather report not only from the Houston Office but from the Galveston Office of the United States Weather Bureau.

Mr. ROSS stated that he desired the following investigation after all the other investigation in this matter was completed:

1. A reinterview of MARVIN SPENCER, Texas City;
2. Reinterview of BEN L. MITCHELL, 2308 Seventh Avenue North, Texas City, Texas, who was a volunteer fireman at the time of the explosion and who stated there was no water in the fire hose aboard the vessel;
3. Investigation at Seybold Laboratories, which company does a volume of business originating from captains or agents of vessels and which business concerned itself with an analysis of the cargoes.

Mr. ROSS also stated that he desired a reinterview of GIRDIAN who previously stated that in connection with broken bags aboard the vessel there was no bag sewer.

Mr. ROSS also stated that he desired at a later date the interview of Captain PHARO, the officer for the Masters Mates and Pilots Association, 1909 Wayside, Houston, Tex., to ascertain if there are any well-respected sea captains on the beach for possible expert testimony as to general navigation procedure regarding this case.

HO 121-39

On January 5, 1958, F. C. LOOS, Chief Inspector, Houston Fire Department, was interviewed at approximately two miles south of Conroe, Texas. Mr. LOOS stated that he would not be the proper person to be called as to the procedure methods and regulations concerning ammonium nitrate fires. Mr. LOOS stated, however, that he knew, as a matter of policy, that any statements made by the experts for the New York Board of Underwriters would be "gospel" as far as the Houston Fire Department was concerned and that he felt any testimony by an expert would agree with the testimony given by members of the Houston Fire Department. Mr. LOOS further stated that in his opinion the Fire Chief in Newark, New Jersey, is considered to be a national authority on port fires and nitrate fires. Mr. LOOS recalls reading an article which he believes concerns nitrate fires written by that individual.

- P -

## Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : DIRECTOR, FBI

DATE: JAN 31 1958

FROM : *lty* ENCL HOUSTON (131-39)SUBJECT: *0*  
SS WILSON B. KEENE;  
SS HIGHFLYER;  
SS GRANDCAMP; ADMIRALTY  
NUMBERS 1868, 1869, 1870  
ADMIRALTY MATTER  
OO: Houston

Enclosed herewith for the Bureau are two copies of the report of SA JOSEPH J. DOOLING, dated JAN 31 1958 at Houston, as well as eight copies of blank memoranda, dated JAN 31 1958, at Houston.

ADMINISTRATIVE

No reporting is contained herein which concerns itself with the person interviewed to locate the pertinent witnesses or arrangements made concerning such interviews.

LEADHOUSTON:AT HOUSTON, TEXAS:

Will complete investigation requested by Departmental memorandum dated 1/3/58, and will complete investigation requested by AUSA JAMES E. ROSS, which he did not request to be held in abeyance. 37

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ENCLOSURE  
REFERENCE

Report of SA JOSEPH J. DOOLING, dated 12/20/57, at Houston.

② - Bureau (Encls. 10) *✓*  
2 - Houston

JJD/mfh  
(4)

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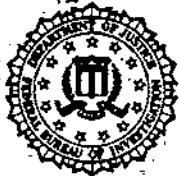
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EX-126

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R. H. S. 5/1/58



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

In Reply, Please Refer to  
File No.

Houston, Texas  
JAN 31 1958

Re: SS WILSON B. KEENE;  
SS HIGHFLYER;  
SS GRANDCAMP; ADMIRALTY  
NUMBERS 1868, 1869, 1870  
ADMIRALTY MATTER

Chief of Police RANKIN LUBBOCK DeWALT is a man of over six feet in height, a large frame, impressive neat personal appearance. He speaks in a clear precise manner and expresses himself very well. He gives the appearance of being educated, above the average person, and as a matter of fact, graduated from the FBI National Academy. He is well respected in the community, deliberate in his statements and accurate.

DeWALT would be considered to be an excellent witness.

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Civ Dir  
1/4/58  
JWL

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ENCLOSURE

131-363-87



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Houston, Texas

JAN 31 1958

In Reply, Please Refer to  
File No.

Re: SS WILSON B. KEENE;  
SS HIGHFLYER;  
SS GRANDCAMP; ADMIRALTY  
NUMBERS 1868, 1869, 1870  
ADMIRALTY MATTER

Mr. J. D. LATTA is a man approximately seventy years of age. Considering his physical condition and age he has an extremely strong handshake. He is apparently over six feet tall and a big frame; however, he has lost considerable weight during the past year and is bedridden not being able to move about by himself. Mr. LATTA speaks in a firm strong manner except when the question of the explosion is discussed. He expresses himself well and apparently is a likeable type person, well educated and has been a respected member of the community.

During the course of the interview with Mr. LATTA it was necessary on three separate occasions to deliberately interrupt the interview and immediately change the subject to present day items because Mr. LATTA's emotional turmoil when the actual explosion was discussed by him or when he related that the Coast Guard held him to be responsible for the explosion. Mr. LATTA takes this matter very seriously and personally and it is indeed impossible to intelligently converse with him on the actual explosion or the Coast Guard hearings.

In view of the fact Mr. LATTA is extremely ill, bedridden, elderly, and emotionally disturbed by certain enumerated events, he would not be considered to be a desirable witness.

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*V. Green  
Civ. Div. 1/1  
Civ. 1/1/1*

ENCLOSURE

131-363-87

# FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Reporting Office HOUSTON	Office of Origin HOUSTON	Date JAN 31 1958	Investigative Period 1/21-24, 27/58
TITLE OF CASE SS WILSON B. KEENE; SS HIGHFLYER; SS GRANDCAMP Limitation of Liability, April 16 & 17, 1947; Petitions of Lykes Bros. Steamship Co. and Republic of France Southern Texas Admiralty Numbers 1868, 1869, and 1870		Report made by FRANK M. IVEY	Type of By EM
CHARACTER OF CASE		ADMIRALTY MATTERS	

### Synopsis:

HENRY CROW EDINBURGH, JOE HUGH HANEY, CLYDE RAYMOND ANDERSON, and FRANK ARTHUR STEINBACH were reinterviewed. They verified their signed statements given in 1948. Exceptions noted. Where these witnesses have knowledge, they answered specific questions requested by the Department.

-P-

**DETAILS:**

Approved <i>[Signature]</i>	Special Agent in Charge	Do not write in spaces below	
Copies made:			
2 - Bureau 131-363 1 - USA, Houston 2 - Houston 131-39		131-363-88 RECORDED-13 3 6 Feb 1958 <i>[Handwritten signature]</i>	

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S. S. S.

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
INTERVIEW REPORT

January 29, 1958

HENRY CROW EDINBURGH was interviewed at his place of employment, the Carbide and Carbon Chemical Corporation, Texas City, Texas, where Mr. EDINBURGH is employed as a boiler maker. Mr. EDINBURGH stated he presently resides at P.O. Box #549, League City, Texas.

The contents of the signed statement provided by Mr. EDINBURGH to a special agent of the FBI on March 13, 1948 was reviewed by Mr. EDINBURGH, and he verified the information contained therein. The following is the signed statement furnished in 1948 by Mr. EDINBURGH.

"General Experience"

"This witness can testify that he was employed as a longshoreman at Texas City, Texas on December 28, 1946 up until the date of the explosion, April 16, 1947. During this period he handled ammonium nitrate fertilizer both in the warehouses and in the holds of various boats. He never considered ammonium nitrate fertilizer as dangerous. He never received any special instructions on how to handle this fertilizer.

"Safety Regulations"

"This witness will testify that all of the ammonium nitrate fertilizer that he ever saw was contained in brown paper waterproof sacks of several layers thickness coated with some sort of black material. On the sacks were written the words "Ammonium Nitrate Fertilizer 32.5%". He does not know to what the percentage referred. He states that at times these sacks of fertilizer broke open in the warehouses while being handled, at which time they would be resacked. However, in the holds of the various boats where he worked, when the sacks of fertilizer would break open, the contents would spill out and seldom ever be picked up, but the broken sacks would be stacked along with the other sacks in the hold of the boat. He states there were "no smoking" signs posted in the warehouses, and that he had never seen any of the workmen smoking in the warehouses. This witness does not smoke himself, but states he has seen other workers smoking in the holds of boats while loading nitrate fertilizer. He has also seen the workers place their lighted cigarettes upon the cargo board that goes around the ship next to the skin of the ship. He says he has never seen any of

Interview with HENRY CROW EDINBURGH

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File # 131-39

on 1/22/58 at Texas City, Texas

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by Special Agent FRANK M. IVEY/em

Dictated: 1/28/58

HO 131-39

these lighted cigarettes fall down between the cargo board and the skin of the ship, but that he believes many of them have.

"Pertinent Period"

"This witness will testify that the SS HIGH FLYER came into the port at Texas City, Texas several days before the SS GRAND CAMP arrived. The latter boat arrived on April 11, 1947. This witness was assigned for one day loading ammonium nitrate fertilizer in the hold on the HIGH FLYER. He does not recall just what day that was. His foreman was ADOLPH RHODEN. This witness states that some of the sacks of the fertilizer broke open while being loaded in the hold of the High Flyer and as was the usual custom, these sacks were stacked up in the boat. He does not recall seeing anyone smoking in the hold of the High Flyer on the day he assisted in loading the fertilizer.

"This witness will testify that he worked only on one shift on the SS Grand Camp and that was Sunday night April 13, 1947 from 7:00 PM to 5:00 AM, Monday morning, April 14, 1947. During this shift he was loading ammonium nitrate fertilizer in the #4 hold during that shift. He does not recall seeing any watchers on the Grand Camp. He does not recall seeing any "no smoking" signs on the Grand Camp. He will testify that while loading the fertilizer on the Grand Camp in the #4 Hold, a number of the sacks broke open and these broken sacks were stacked along with the other stacks of fertilizer in the hold.

"He also remembers seeing some wooden boxes with the destination "Havre, France", which were in the tween decks, the deck above the No. 4 Hold. He does not know the contents of these wooden boxes. This witness will testify that when he left the Grand Camp at 5:00 AM, April 14, 1947, he saw nothing unusual on the Grand Camp. He next reported for work at 8:00 AM, Tuesday, April 15, 1947 and was assigned to work on the tracks along Pier A loading knocked down box cars from a gondola, which were being placed on the High Flyer.

HO 131-39

"This witness went on the High Flyer several times that day to help with the rig and also to help cover up the hatches when the workers left at noon and also when they left at the end of the day. He does not recall seeing anyone smoke in any of the restricted areas on the High Flyer or on the docks on Tuesday, April 15, 1947. When he left work at 10:45 PM that night, everything appeared to be in order.

"This witness reported for work at 8:00 AM, April 16, 1947 along the tracks next to the High Flyer and was assigned to the same type of work that he had been doing the day before. At approximately 8:20 AM, he noticed smoke and burning paper flying in the air over the warehouses. Someone said the Grand Camp was on fire. He went on working for some fifteen or twenty minutes when someone called for him to come up and help cover up the holds. He went on board the High Flyer and helped cover the hatches. After doing this, the foreman told him to stand by as they might go back to work. This witness walked over to Warehouse 0 near where the Grand Camp was burning. He was standing about two hundred yards from the Grand Camp watching the fire and talking to BURTON GORE at the time of the explosion. GORE was killed. This witness was knocked down and dazed. He suffered a broken left arm, his head was cut open, his ear drums burst, and he received numerous other injuries. A station wagon picked him up and took him to a clinic where he was given a hypodermic and sent to the St. Mary's Hospital in Galveston, Texas, where he remained for two weeks.

"This witness will testify that before the explosion, none of the warehouses were on fire, but after the explosion he noticed that Warehouse 0 had been leveled and was burning."

Mr. EDINBURGH stated with reference to the information contained in the above signed statement that he would take exception to the fact that his signed statement indicated under the caption of "Pertinent Period" that he was assigned for one day loading ammonium nitrate fertilizer in the "Hold" of the Highflyer. He pointed out that at no time had he

loaded ammonium nitrate fertilizer on the Highflyer but had been employed in the capacity of loading knocked down gondola box cars aboard this vessel. From his recollection, he stated that the first occasion he had of assisting in the loading of the Highflyer was on Tuesday, April 15, 1948. Mr. EDINBURGH took exception to the information contained in paragraph 2 under the caption of "Pertinent Period" in his signed statement regarding his observation of any watchers on the Grand Camp. He stated that he could specifically recall that there had been an American Guard stationed on the top deck of the Grand Camp at the head of the gang plank between Hold 3 and 4. He stated that he could be specific concerning the fact that this was an American Guard because he had seen this individual on several occasions prior to his observations of him aboard the Grand Camp, adding that he had also seen this individual on occasions following the Texas City Disaster.

2. (a) Mr. EDINBURGH stated he did not recall having seen the French Crew of the SS Grandcamp smoking on deck of this vessel around the hatches or in the holds.

(b) Mr. EDINBURGH stated he did not recall the American Longshoremen smoking in the holds of the Grand Camp.

(c) Mr. EDINBURGH stated he could positively recall that there had been no French Guard or Watchman posted in or about the #4 hold to prevent smoking there.

(d) Mr. EDINBURGH stated he did not recall any specific or special instructions issued regarding smoking on the SS Grand Camp, stating that there could have been such instructions issued but at this time he has no recollection of it.

(e) Mr. EDINBURGH said he possibly has a recollection of one French crewman coming down into hold #4 shortly after 7:00 PM on Sunday, April 13, 1947. However, this individual only remained a short time and then left. He stated he saw no other members of the French crew during his particular shift. He pointed out that he paid little attention to the above mentioned French crewmen and could not recall any evidence of drinking on the part of this

HO 131-39

crewmen. He stated he had no information concerning the possible presence of a wine closet in hold #4.

(f) Mr. EDINBURGH said he recalled having seen a partial cargo of Grass Twine stored 'tween decks in hold #4 which he believed to have been possibly combustible. He stated he also noticed 'tween decks in hold #4 numerous wooden boxes of various sizes which he stated were among the first items removed from hold #4 by the firemen a few minutes before the Grandcamp exploded. He pointed out that, as he recalls, these wooden boxes were taken from #4 hold and placed on the top deck by the firemen. He pointed out that he could recall no other combustible material stored in the lower deck of #4 hold along with the ammonium nitrate fertilizer.

(g) Mr. EDINBURGH stated that he generally referred to the cargo loaded in the #4 hold as "fertilizer" rather than "nitrate" although each individual bag was plainly stenciled with the words "ammonium nitrate fertilizer 32.5".

(h) Mr. EDINBURGH stated he had no information concerning the possible presence of ammunition aboard the SS Grandcamp.

(i) Mr. EDINBURGH stated he had no information regarding the possible presence of any acid in #3 hold.

3. HENRY CROW EDINBURGH stated he would willingly testify under oath concerning the information contained in his signed statement and further concerning the information related in addition above.

5. Mr. EDINBURGH stated that as he now recalls in addition to being interviewed in 1948 by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, he was also interviewed by representatives of various insurance companies whose names he does not now recall and also by the American Red Cross. He pointed out that these interviews in addition to the one by the FBI were conducted within a year following the explosion aboard the SS Grandcamp.

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
INTERVIEW REPORT

January 30, 1958

JOE HUGH HANEY, Route #1, box 214, Cleveland, Texas was interviewed at his residence. Mr. HANEY advised that he is presently retired, living on social security benefits.

The original signed statement furnished by Mr. HANEY to Special Agents of the FBI in 1948 was reviewed by Mr. HANEY; and he stated that the facts contained therein were essentially correct, except as noted. The following is the original signed statement of Mr. HANEY as obtained in 1948:

"Texas City, Texas  
March 9, 1948

"I, Joe H. Haney, make the following statement to Roy T. Noonan and Leo K. Cook, Special Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. I live at 2108 4th Ave. N., Texas City, Texas. I have been a longshoreman off and on since 1913.

"I started to work on the Grand Camp on the 11th of April, 1947, at 10AM, in the warehouse and we were working on batch number two. Jesse Newlin was the gang foreman. I then worked the day shift on Saturday the 12th as a winchman and Leonard Boswell was the foreman. Sunday we were reined out. Monday I worked the day shift on the winch for Boswell's gang and then doubled back at night under Garrett Bush, foreman, and worked the winch with John Smith. This was on number four batch where I worked all the time except the first day, Friday, to the best of my recollection. Tuesday morning the 15th I worked on Boswell's gang until noon when I knocked off. I came back Wednesday morning, the 16th and went to work on the Wilson B. Keene.

"I have loaded this material generally called "Nitrate" or "Fertilizer", on about five or six ships. I was away from the longshoreman work from 1937 to 1944, and the first I remember loading this material was since the last war and it seems to me it was only about six months that I had been loading it, prior to April, 1947. The procedure in loading the Grand Camp was the same as on the other ships; the number of men was the same; and the same system of loading was used. The bags looked the same as

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Interview with JOE HUGH HANEY File # 131-39

on 1/27/58 at Cleveland, Texas

by Special Agent FRANK M. IVY/em Dictated: 1/28/58

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they had when loaded on other boats, and the material looked the same.

"Regarding the bags, I have handled them in the warehouse loading to the ships. The nitrate was stacked by the carload lots in the warehouse. Sometimes we would run into a car load that had lots of defective bags, and then again some lots would have very few bad bags. The defective ones would appear to have been heated up and the paper was brittle like and would break easily but the sacks were generally the same color as the others. Our orders were to lay aside the broken bags in the warehouse. Later the material would be rebagged by the sack sewer, that is, would be shoveled up and put in other sacks and a wire put on them. The sack sewer on this stuff was actually a clean up man. On the Grand Camp I did not work in the hold but I did work some in the warehouse, and also as a winchmen. I set sacks aside as before when I was in the warehouse and I don't know if any were rebagged and I did not see any rebagged. If any sacks were broken in the hold or on the way in they were usually stored that way and I would say that was done here. On another ship that loaded out some time before the Grand Camp we had a great many rotten sacks and two carloads were loaded in boxcars out of warehouse O and taken around to warehouse A where we loaded it almost in bulk. I worked about a day and a half during this loading. In the warehouse there was some flour at the time we loaded on the Grand Camp but this flour was not with the fertilizer but was in separate sections.

"Regarding the smoking regulations unless we got strict orders not to smoke we went ahead and smoked on deck. In the holds on some cargos we did smoke. On the Grand Camp in the holds I could not say that I saw any smoking but I heard discussions among the men to the effect that they were smoking. I know this is the usual thing because I have smoked in the holds on other ships. I did smoke on the winches on the Grand Camp. On the loading of the Grand Camp I can not say that I saw any smoking in the warehouse but I have seen some smoking in the warehouse in the past. However this is not done too often because it is against not only the rules but is against the law. On the boats all that can be done is to make a fellow stop smoking.

"On the Grand Camp I did not see any "No Smoking" signs. The crew of this ship were around this ship on the deck and various places smoking all of the time. Most all of the crew were smoking. I remember the only thing said about smoking on this ship was when I said that I wondered if

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we could smoke and some of the men in the gang I was working with said "Well, the crew is smoking so I guess it is alright for the rest of us".

"On the 16th of April, 1947, at 8 AM, I started to work with a gang on the Wilson B. Keene. About 8:30 AM we covered up because of the smoke and paper burning and flying from warehouse O over to warehouse B and on the ship. I left the Keene about 8:45 AM and stood for a time watching the fire at the end of Pier O and then left about five minutes after nine. I got to 3rd St., between Texas Ave. and 1st Ave., and had just entered the old ILA hall when the blast came.

"I have read this statement, two typewritten pages, and have signed both pages.

/s/"Joe H. Haney"

Mr. HANEY stated that the only exception that he would take to the information in the above signed statement was in regard to his longshoreman activities at Texas City, Texas on April 14, 1947 and April 15, 1947 in paragraph 2 of the above signed statement. He stated that actually he had worked the night shift from 7:00 PM on April 14, 1947 to 6:00 AM on April 15, 1947 and had then gone home. He stated he returned to the dock in time to go on duty at 1:00 PM on April 15, 1947, and he worked until 6:00 PM that day. He stated that his duties on the night shift commencing at 7:00 PM April 14, 1947 had been that of a wenchman for hatch #4 aboard the SS Grandcamp. He pointed out that on his particular shift on April 15, 1947 from 1:00 PM to 6:00 PM he had been employed trucking fertilizer to the ship's side of the SS Grandcamp from warehouse O.

2. (a) Mr. HANEY stated that he recalls having observed numerous French crewmen aboard the SS Grandcamp smoking on the main deck and around the various holds of the ship whenever he, Mr. HANEY, worked aboard this vessel. He stated that because he, himself, had never gone down in any of the ship's holds, he had never had the occasion to observe any crewmen in any of the various hatches.

(b) Mr. HANEY stated that he had never observed any longshoremen smoking in the holds of the SS Grandcamp.

(c) Mr. HANEY said that he could not recall having seen any French guard or watchmen posted aboard the

HO 131-39

SS Grandcamp to prevent smoking, although there could have been one without his being aware of it.

(d) Mr. HANEY stated that he could specifically recall that there had been no special instructions issued regarding smoking aboard the SS Grandcamp.

(e) Mr. HANEY stated that he had never seen the ship's captain of the SS Grandcamp, adding that he did not recall observing any of the French crewmen under the influence of stimulants. He pointed out that he had observed numerous French crewmen smoking on the main deck and around the various hatches adding that as usual with a foreign ship the French crewmen did not mingle with the American longshoremen loading the SS Grandcamp. He said that since he had never gone below the main deck of the Grandcamp, he had no information concerning the possible presence of a wine closet located in #4 hold.

(f) Mr. HANEY stated that the only thing that he had helped load on the SS Grandcamp had been ammonium nitrate fertilizer, adding that he had no knowledge of any other combustible type materials being stored in the same hold along with the fertilizer.

(g) Mr. HANEY stated that he and the other longshoremen working with him generally referred to the material being loaded on the SS Grandcamp as "fertilizer" although persons could plainly note that each individual bag was labeled with the word "nitrate".

(h) Mr. HANEY stated he had no information concerning the possible presence of ammunition on board the SS Grandcamp.

(i) Mr. HANEY stated that he had no information concerning the possible presence of any acid in #3 hold on the SS Grandcamp, adding that he had only been occupied aboard the Grandcamp in the loading of #4 hold.

3. Mr. HANEY stated that he would willingly testi-

HO 131-39

fy under oath to the information contained in his original signed statement as well as to the information noted above in the event his testimony were needed.

5. Mr. HANEY stated that in addition to being interviewed by the FBI in 1948, he was also interviewed by some insurance company at about the same time although he could not now recall the name of the insurance company. He added that he had also been questioned by numerous individuals concerning his recollection of the Texas City Disaster within the year following the explosion, but he could only recall now having given written statements to the insurance company and to the FBI.

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
INTERVIEW REPORT

January 30, 1958

CLYDE RAYMOND ANDERSON was interviewed at his residence which is approximately 5 miles from Pearland, Texas on the old Alvin Highway. His mailing address is Box #255, Pearland, Texas.

The contents of the signed statement provided by Mr. ANDERSON to a special agent of the FBI in 1948 was reviewed by Mr. ANDERSON, and he verified the information contained in this statement as true and complete. The following is the signed statement furnished by Mr. CLYDE RAYMOND ANDERSON in 1948:

"General Experience"

"This witness will testify that he was a longshoreman for nine months prior to April 16, 1947. During that time he handled ammonium nitrate fertilizer on a good many ships, working in the holds of these ships. He has also handled ammonium nitrate fertilizer in the warehouses. He never considered ammonium nitrate fertilizer as dangerous, although he was paid ten cents more an hour for handling this fertilizer than for handling other merchandise. He said he does not know the reason for this extra payment. He has never received any special instructions on how to handle ammonium nitrate fertilizer.

"Safety Regulations"

"This witness can testify that the ammonium nitrate fertilizer was contained in heavy brown paper sacks of several layers thickness. These sacks contained the words, "Ammonium Nitrate Fertilizer", that at times these sacks would be broken in handling them in the warehouse but that they were always resacked before sending them on board the boat. In handling the fertilizer in the holds of boats the sacks would frequently break, however, the fertilizer would be resacked unless the sack was not badly broken, in which case it would be stacked up along with the others.

"Mr. ANDERSON states that he has never seen any-one smoking in the warehouse, however, he has observed workers smoking in the holds of the boats while loading ammonium nitrate fertilizer. Mr. ANDERSON does not smoke himself.

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Interview with CLYDE RAYMOND ANDERSON File # 131-39  
on 1/24/58 at Pearland, Texas

by Special Agent FRANK M. IVEY/sem Dictated: 1/28/58

HO 131-39

He has observed workers put their lighted cigarettes on sacks of nitrate in the holds of the boats and at times these lighted cigarettes would fall down in between the sacks and would be left there by the workers.

"Pertinent Period

"This witness will testify that a few days prior to April 16, 1947, he worked on either the Grand Camp or the High Flyer, he does not recall which, loading ammonium nitrate fertilizer in one of the hatches. He does not recall which hatch. During that time he observed the workers smoking in the holds of boat while loading this fertilizer.

"At noon, Tuesday, April 15, 1947, this witness was assigned to work on the William B. Keene loading flour. He worked doing this until around 10:00 PM that night. When he left that night everything appeared to be in good shape. He reported back to the William B. Keene at 8:00 AM, Wednesday, April 16, 1947, where he was assigned to loading a truck of flour out of a box car to be placed on the William B. Keene. His foreman was "Country" LENING. Somewhere around 8:30 PM this witness noticed smoke coming over Warehouse A and someone said the Grand Camp was on fire. His foreman told him to come up and help cover the hatches of the William B. Keene, which he did. His foreman then told him to knock off work until after the fire was put out.

"Mr. ANDERSON then walked down to Pier 0 where the Grand Camp was docked and stood around watching the fire with J. D. MEEKS and a man named PITTS. They were about 100 yards from the Grand Camp when the explosion occurred. Both MEEKS and PITTS were killed. This witness states that he never heard an explosion, that the first thing he knew water was flowing over him and he received a blow on the head. Just prior to the explosion he did not see the warehouse or anything else on fire but the Grand Camp. He says the Grand Camp seemed to be smoking all over and he could not tell where the fire was coming from. He did not see any flames on this boat. He could see men on the Grand Camp with the water hose fighting the fire. After the explosion he observed a number of dead and injured people around. Both of his knees were cut up considerably and his ears bothered

HO 131-39

him. He assisted an injured man get to a car and wrapped him up in some clothes. He started toward home and came upon another injured man and gave him assistance. He finally arrived at his home at 511 1st Avenue, North. He was taken to Dr. DANFORTH's where his knees were bandaged and his ears washed out. He returned to his home, which was a trailer, and had his trailer pulled from 511 1st Avenue, North, to the 2400 block on Bay Street, Texas City. He was at this latter place when the High Flyer blew up."

Mr. ANDERSON stated that he is presently unable to recall which of the 2 vessels, the SS Grandcamp or the SS Highflyer, he worked on a few days prior to April 16, 1947. He added that he also did not recall which hatch he was assisting in loading ammonium nitrate fertilizer into. He pointed out that the reason for his inability to recollect such information was due to the fact that he was injured in the Texas City explosion, and has on numerous occasions had lapses of memory. In this connection he also stated that since the date of the injury received in the Texas City explosion, he has had a "roaring sensation" in his head most of the time which sensation possibly has caused his lapses of memory. He pointed out that in reference to the information contained in his signed statement furnished in 1948, he would be able to testify as to the facts contained therein only if given the written record of his statements made in 1948 to refresh his recollection.

2. (a) Mr. ANDERSON stated he could not specifically recall having ever worked aboard the SS Grandcamp, therefore he could recall no information concerning the French crewmen smoking on deck around the hatches or in the holds of this vessel.

(b) Mr. ANDERSON stated that although he did not recall specifically working aboard the SS Grandcamp, he could definitely recall that it had been customary for the American longshoremen to smoke in the holds of the various vessels they worked on, adding that he had observed this on ship and on all types of cargo including ammonium nitrate fertilizer.

HO 131-39

(c) Mr. ANDERSON stated that he was unable to recall the presence or absence of a French guard or watchman aboard the SS Grandcamp to prevent smoking.

(d) Mr. ANDERSON stated that he could recall no special instructions issued in regard to smoking on the SS Grandcamp.

(e) Mr. ANDERSON stated he could not recall having seen any of the French crewmen of the SS Grandcamp or the master of this vessel. Therefore, he had no information concerning the demeanor of the crew or of the French master. He added also that he had no information regarding the possible presence of the wine closet in hold #4 of the SS Grandcamp.

(f) Mr. ANDERSON stated that since he could not recall having worked aboard the SS Grandcamp he could not recall any combustible materials being stored in the same hold of the French vessel with the ammonium nitrate fertilizer.

(g) Mr. ANDERSON stated that as he now recalls, he and the other longshoremen generally referred to the material being loaded as "fertilizer" although each individual sack had been plainly labeled "ammonium nitrate fertilizer".

(h) Mr. ANDERSON stated that he had no information concerning the possible presence of ammunition aboard the SS Grandcamp.

(i) Mr. ANDERSON stated that he had no recollection concerning the possible presence of any acid in #3 hold of the SS Grandcamp.

3. Mr. ANDERSON stated that he would willingly testify under oath in accordance with information contained in his original signed statement in 1948.

5. Mr. ANDERSON stated that in addition to being interviewed by the FBI, he had also been interviewed by the Texas Employers Insurance Company and the Monsanto Chemical Company concerning the Texas City explosion. He pointed out that he could not specifically recall the dates on which he had been interviewed by representatives of the Texas Employers

HO 131-39

Insurance Company or by the Monsanto Chemical Company, adding that this had occurred probably around the same time as his interview by the FBI.

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
INTERVIEW REPORT

January 30, 1958

FRANK ARTHUR STEINBACH, 2211 Fifth Avenue, North, Texas City, Texas was interviewed at his place of employment, The Parsons Construction Company in Texas City, Texas. Mr. STEINBACH stated he is a carpenter affiliated with the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, Local #973, 817 Ninth Avenue, North, Texas City, Texas and stated he can generally be contacted either at home or through the local since he obtains his carpenter work out of Local #973.

The signed statement furnished the FBI by Mr. STEINBACH in 1948 was reviewed by him, and he stated that the facts contained therein are true and correct according to his present recollections. The following is the original signed statement of Mr. STEINBACH:

"Texas City, Texas  
March 18, 1948

"I, F. A. STEINBACH, hereby make the following voluntary statement to CHARLES A. WHITTEN, who has identified himself to me to be a Special Agent of the FBI, knowing that same may be used in court.

"I am 36 years of age, married, and have two children. I reside at 2211 Fifth Avenue North, Texas City, Texas. I am presently employed by W. S. BELLows Corporation, Houston, Texas.

"I worked off and on for about five years as a longshoreman. On April 16, 1947 I was home in bed when the GrandCamp exploded, however I worked all of the previous night until 6:00 A.M. trucking fertilizer for loading on the GrandCamp. Specifically, I was trucking this fertilizer from warehouse 0, the one nearest to the GrandCamp, to the side of this ship. We would hook up the boom and the regular longshoremen would load the fertilizer aboard the GrandCamp and into hatch #2. I think this is the number of this hatch.

"This material which I only knew as fertilizer was in paper bags. I did notice the word "fertilizer" on these bags. There might have been other writing on the bags, but

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Interview with FRANK ARTHUR STEINBACH File # 131-39

on 1/24/58 at Texas City, Texas

by Special Agent FRANK M. IVEY/em Dictated: 1/28/58

HO 131-39

I never paid any attention to it.

"I never received any warning that this fertilizer was of an explosive nature, nor was I instructed to handle it carefully. In fact, I received no specific instructions about the handling of this material.

"There were "No Smoking" signs all throughout the warehouses. I have never seen anybody smoking in the warehouses, and I never smoked there myself. I was a pusher for about one year, and I paid particular attention to see that no one in my gang smoked.

"I was never on the GrandCamp so I don't know whether or not they had any "No Smoking" signs posted aboard this ship.

"I might mention here that the night before the explosion, after midnight, I smelled a peculiar odor like manure burning, and I called this to the attention of E. R. BOLEN, another stevedore, and to others who are now dead, to this odor. They also indicated that they smelled it, but we did not give it much thought. I figured this odor might have come from the Monsanto Chemical Plant. However, I never saw any smoke on the GrandCamp before I knocked off. I went straight home and to bed when I left the ship. I was also home when the High Flyer blew up at 1:15 A.M. April 17, 1947.

"I have no theory as to what caused the explosion on the GrandCamp, but I heard a general rumor that there was some small ammunition aboard, but have no definite knowledge of this myself.

"I have read the above statement, and it is true to the best of my knowledge.

/s/ "F. A. STEINBACH

"Witness:

/s/"CHARLES A WHITTEN, FBI"

Mr. STEINBACH stated that he could not add nor detract anything from the information contained in his original signed statement.

2. (a) Mr. STEINBACH stated that since he had never worked aboard the SS Grandcamp, he had no information concerning the French crew smoking on deck around the hatches or in the holds of the vessel.

(b) Mr. STEINBACH stated that since he had never been aboard the SS Grandcamp, he had no information regarding the American longshoremen smoking in the various holds of the vessel. He stated that the only occasion on which he had ever observed American longshoremen smoking in the holds of various ships was when they were handling tin ore cargoes.

(c) Mr. STEINBACH stated that he could recall nothing concerning the presence or absence of a French guard or watchman aboard the SS Grandcamp to prevent smoking. He stated that prior to the Texas City Disaster he had handled the cargoes aboard several French ships at Texas City, and that at no time had he observed a French guard or watchman posted aboard any of the vessels. He stated that invariably an American watchman had been posted aboard all vessels at Texas City, foreign and domestic, in the process of loading or unloading.

(d) Mr. STEINBACH stated that he could recall no special instructions issued regarding smoking on the SS Grandcamp other than general policy to not smoke on board any vessel being loaded or unloaded.

(e) Mr. STEINBACH stated he had never seen any of the French crewmen or the master of the SS Grandcamp, therefore he had no knowledge concerning the demeanor of such people. He added that he had no information concerning the possible presence of a wine closet in #4 hold on the SS Grandcamp.

(f) Mr. STEINBACH stated that since he had never been aboard the SS Grandcamp he had no information pertaining to any combustible materials being stored in the #4 hold of the SS Grandcamp with the ammonium nitrate fertilizer.

(g) Mr. STEINBACH stated that the longshoremen generally referred to the material being loaded aboard the SS Grandcamp as "fertilizer" although each bag was plainly labeled on the outside as "ammonium nitrate fertilizer".

(h) Mr. STEINBACH stated since he had never been aboard the SS Grandcamp he had never personally seen the presence of any ammunition on board this vessel. He stated, however, that he had heard from other longshoremen, identities now not recalled, that there had been a quantity of ammunition stored in one of the holds of the vessel. He stated that as he understood it, the ammunition had been of rifle size in steel jackets. He added that he recalls someone telling him that a box of this ammunition had been broken open somehow, and that several rounds of the ammunition removed by the longshoremen as souvenirs. He stated that he could not recall any indication as to the quantity of the ammunition stored aboard the SS Grandcamp.

(i) Mr. STEINBACH stated he could not recall the presence of any acid in the #3 hold of the SS Grandcamp.

3. Mr. STEINBACH stated he would willingly testify under oath in accordance with the information contained in his statement furnished in 1948 and also in connection with the additional information provided above.

5. Mr. STEINBACH stated that he had not been interviewed by any other sources concerning the Texas City explosion, other than the FBI.

HO 131-39

At Texas City, Texas:

On January 24, 1958, KATHERINE JONES, Collection Department, Retail Merchants Association, 506 Seventh Avenue, North, advised that CECIL HOWARD WILLIAMS has been on file since July, 1948, adding that one place of residence had been Apartment #32, Third Avenue Villas, North, Texas City, Texas. Mrs. JONES pointed out that her files reflected that A. A. PRUITT, 618½ Seventh Avenue, North, Texas City, Texas would know the whereabouts of WILLIAMS.

On January 24, 1958 A. A. PRUITT, concrete contractor, located at 618½ Seventh Avenue, North, advised that CECIL HOWARD WILLIAMS formerly worked for him on occasions in the vicinity of Texas City as a concrete finisher, adding that WILLIAMS has left the State of Texas and is presently believed to be in the State of Alabama. Mr. PRUITT stated that he would attempt to obtain the exact location of WILLIAMS and make this information available to SA IVEY.

On January 27, 1958, Mr. PRUITT advised that SAMMY HEMMELINE, one of his cement finishers, informed him that HEMMELINE knew the whereabouts of WILLIAMS.

On January 27, 1958, SAMMY HEMMELINE, Mom's Hotel, 616 First Avenue, North, advised that he had recently been in contact with CECIL HOWARD WILLIAMS and had been informed that WILLIAMS was working as the cement finisher for Brown and Root, Incorporated of Houston, Texas some place in the State of Alabama.

AT HOUSTON TEXAS:

On January 27, 1958, BERNICE WILKINSON, Personnel Records Section, Brown and Root, Incorporated, advised that according to her pay roll records that CECIL HOWARD WILLIAMS, social security number 410-44-0095, is presently employed as a cement helper at the SOS Plant near McIntosh, Alabama.

-P-

## Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : DIRECTOR, FBI (131-363)

DATE: JAN 31 1958

FROM : SAC, HOUSTON (131-39)

SUBJECT: SS WILSON B. KEENE;  
 SS HIGHFLYER; SS GRANDCAMP  
 Limitation of Liability, April 16 &  
 17, 1947; Petitions of Lykes Bros.  
 Steamship Co. and Republic of France  
 Southern Texas Admiralty Numbers  
 1868, 1869, and 1870  
 ADMIRALTY MATTERS  
 (OO: Houston)

Enclosed herewith for the Bureau are two copies  
 of the report of SA FRANK M. IVEY, dated JAN 31 1958  
 at Houston, Texas. Also, enclosed for the Bureau are four  
 letterhead memorandums on the following:

1. HENRY CROW EDINBURGH
2. JOE HUGH HANEY
3. CLYDE RAYMOND ANDERSON
4. FRANK ARTHUR STEINBACH

ADMINISTRATIVE

An airtel lead was sent out for the Mobile Office  
 by Houston January 28, 1958 for the interview of CECIL HOWARD  
 WILLIAMS at McIntosh, Alabama. A restatement of this lead  
 is not being made in instant report nor are copies of this  
 report being made available for the Mobile Office.

② - Bureau (131-363) (Encls. 6)  
 2 - Houston (131-39) RECORDED-13  
 FMI/em  
 (4)

131-363-89

M.O. report  
1/31/58

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EX-108

ENCLOSURE

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EX-108

6 8 FEB 10 1958



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Houston, Texas

January 30, 1958

In Reply, Please Refer to  
File No.

Re: SS WILSON B. KEENE;  
SS HIGHFLYER; SS GRANDCAMP  
Limitation of Liability, April 16 &  
17, 1947; Petitions of Lykes Bros.  
Steamship Co. and Republic of France  
Southern Texas Admiralty Numbers  
ADMIRALTY MATTERS

JOE HUGH HANEY is 70 years of age, having been born in Carter County, Oklahoma on December 25, 1887. He is 5' 5" tall and weighs 130 pounds. He is a retired long-shoreman and boiler maker, presently living approximately 20 miles on a rural route out of Cleveland, Texas. Mr. HANEY has a seventh grade grammar school education. However, he is well able to express himself in an effective manner. He speaks in a slow quiet manner in a well modulated tone of voice.

It is believed that Mr. HANEY would make a good witness, since he has a better than average recollection of events in spite of his advanced age.

2cc: Civ Div  
1/4/58  
HAD

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131-363-89  
ENCLOSURE



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Houston, Texas

January 31, 1958

In Reply, Please Refer to  
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17, 1947; Petitions of Lykes Bros.  
Steamship Co. and Republic of France  
Southern Texas Admiralty Numbers  
1868, 1869, and 1870.  
ADMIRALTY MATTERS

FRANK ARTHUR STEINBACH is 46 years of age, having been born May 6, 1911 at Verdell, Nebraska. He is 5' 11" tall and weighs 160 pounds. He has been a resident of Texas City, Texas since 1941 during which time he has been a laborer, a carpenter, a gasoline treater, a warehouse man, and a longshoreman. He is presently a union carpenter and has a seventh grade formal education. Mr. STEINBACH presents a good appearance, and he speaks in a well modulated tone of voice. He has a good memory for details, and it is believed that he would make a good witness.

2ccs Civ Div  
1/4/58 JPP

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131-363-89  
ENCLOSURE



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

In Reply, Please Refer to  
File No.

Houston, Texas  
January 30, 1958

Re: SS WILSON B. KEENE;  
SS HIGHFLYER; SS GRANDCAMP  
Limitation of Liability, April 16 &  
17, 1947; Petitions of Lykes Bros.  
Steamship Co. and Republic of France  
Southern Texas Admiralty Numbers  
1868, 1869, and 1870.  
ADMIRALTY MATTERS

CLYDE RAYMOND ANDERSON is 56 years of age, having been born on July 21, 1901 in Douglas County, Missouri. He is 5' 9" tall and weighs 168 pounds. He is of medium build and presents a good appearance. It is not believed that Mr. ANDERSON would make a good witness due to the fact that he admits to lapses of memory which he states results from an injury received in the Texas City Disaster, adding that he has constantly suffered from "roaring sensations" in his head.

Mr. ANDERSON also pointed out that he would not be able to extemporaneously furnish information as to his observations in connection with the Texas City Disaster since he would have to be prompted from his written statement provided in 1948.

2cc: Cir Dir  
2/4/58  
JEP

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131-363-89  
ENCLOSURE



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

In Reply, Please Refer to  
File No.

Houston, Texas  
January 30, 1958

Re: SS WILSON B. KEENE;  
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Limitation of Liability, April 16 &  
17, 1947; Petitions of Lykes Bros.  
Steamship Co. and Republic of France  
Southern Texas Admiralty Numbers  
1868, 1869, and 1870  
ADMIRALTY MATTERS

HENRY CROW EDINBURGH is 46 years of age, having been born March 2, 1911 at Huntsville, Texas. He is 5' 10" tall and weighs 187 pounds. He stated he was in excellent health, and he possesses a neat masculine appearance. Mr. EDINBURGH advised that his formal education consists of an eighth grade school education; and he speaks in a well modulated voice expressing himself freely, sincerely, and honestly.

It is believed that Mr. EDINBURGH would make a good witness.

2cc Civ Div  
2/4/58  
JRP

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ENCLOSURE

131-363-89

# FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Reporting Office <b>SAN DIEGO</b>	Office of Origin <b>HOUSTON</b>	Date <b>1/31/58</b>	Investigative Period <b>1/27, 28, 29/58</b>
TITLE OF CASE <b>SS WILSON B. KEENE; SS HIGHFLYER; SS GRANDCAMP, Limitation of Liability, April 16 and 17, 1947; Petitions of Lykes Brothers Steam- ship Company and Republic of France Southern Texas Admiralty Numbers 1868, 1869, and 1870</b>		Report made by <b>ROBERT S. BAKER</b>	Typed By
		CHARACTER OF CASE <b>ADMIRALTY MATTERS</b>	

Synopsis:

*RL* CLARENCE HENRY WELLS, National City, California, on 1/29/58 furnished a signed statement setting forth his recollections and actions on 4/16/47 in connection with the explosion of the SS Grandcamp at Texas City, Texas. WELLS advised he was willing to testify under oath to the contents of the statement furnished by him. He also furnished the name of THADDEUS GRUNDY as an attorney to whom he furnished a signed statement in 1947 or 1948 pertaining to the Texas City disaster.

-RUC-

DETAILS:

Approved <i>Colb</i>	Special Agent In Charge	Do not write in spaces below	
Copies made:  <b>② - Bureau (131-363) 3 - Houston (131-39) (Enc. -1) (1 - USA, Southern District of Texas) 1 - San Diego (131-13)</b>	<b>131-363-90</b>		<b>RECORDED-13</b>
	<b>FEB 5 1958</b>		<b>EX-121</b>
			<b>STAN/SEC</b>

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YR*  
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FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
INTERVIEW REPORT

1/31/58

The following signed statement of CLARENCE HENRY WELLS, the original of which is being furnished to the Houston Division, is set forth as follows:

"January 29, 1958  
National City, California

"I, CLARENCE HENRY WELLS, 2948 Ridgeway Drive, National City, California, wish to furnish the following voluntary signed statement to ROBERT S. BAKER, who has identified himself to me as a Special Agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

"I was born April 12, 1916 at Bastrop, Texas.

"On April 16, 1947, I went to work at 7 A.M. as a winchman for the number two hold on the SS Grandcamp, which ship was tied up to a loading pier in the proximity of warehouse zero Texas City, Texas. I had originally gone to work on the SS Grandcamp about six or seven days prior to April 16, 1947.

"I was primarily occupied with loading fertilizer (32.5 Nitrate Ammonium) in hold number two of the ship. I remember the 32.5 Nitrate Ammonium was commonly referred to by the stevedores and myself as 'fertilizer', and that it was packed in 100 pound bags. During the loading operation of this cargo, I recall that many of the bags containing the fertilizer were broken and the contents were spilling over the deck and into the number two hold. There was never any attempt on the part of the stevedores or members of the French crew to repair any of the damaged bags either during or after loading.

"I recall the members of the French crew smoked both on the deck and around the hatches. I had occasion to look into the number two hold frequently and I do not recall seeing any of the French crew in the hold. It is customary for only the stevedores to work in the hold during the loading or unloading of a ship.

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Interview with CLARENCE HENRY WELLS File # SD 131-13

on 1/29/58 at National City, California Date Dictated: 1/29/58

by Special Agent ROBERT S. BAKER mid

SD 131-13

"The French crew on board was only a skeleton force as the loading operation was being performed by longshoremen from the International Longshoremen's Association, Local Number 636 of Texas City, Texas. I was aware that members of the French crew drank mostly wine in preference to water, but I do not recall any drunkenness on board ship or any disciplinary problems among members of the French crew due to excessive use of alcohol. I do not recall ever seeing the Captain of the vessel and to the best of my recollection the principal mates on board represented the ship during the loading operation. I recall the mates smoked freely during the loading and to the best of my recollection they were usually standing on the main deck of the ship. I do not recall ever seeing any of the mates ever intoxicated. I do not have any information regarding a wine closet in hold number four or in any other hold on the ship.

"I do remember the stevedores smoked at all times during the loading of the cargo. The stevedores smoked on the loading deck, around the hatches, at the top of hold number two, and also in hold number two. On several occasions I recall the stevedores put out their burning cigarettes by smothering them in loose fertilizer.

"During the days I worked aboard the SS Grandcamp I do not recall ever seeing a watchman nor was there any instructions regarding smoking aboard the ship. I recall that between decks in hold number two there was stored Spanish peanuts in about 100 pound bags and large bundles containing balls of twine. I estimate the balls of twine were approximately six inches in diameter. I do not recall any combustible materials being stored between decks in hold number two. I have no information as to what was stored between decks in hold number four.

"I was told that hold number five contained small arms and ammunition, however, I did not personally see the contents of hold number five, consequently, I was not aware of the specific size or quantity of the ammunition in that hold.

"I do not recall the contents of hold number three.

SD 131-13.

"In regards to the events surrounding the explosion of the SS Grandcamp, I recall that about 8:15 A.M. on April 16, 1947, I heard someone say that there was a fire in hold number four. At this time I was working the winch on hold number two.

"I remember JESSE KENLIN, Gang Foreman for hold number two, ordered the stevedores in that hold to leave the ship because of the fire. Before the stevedores from hold number two went ashore they covered the hatches on this hold.

"I recall the plan for fighting the fire was to pour live steam into hold number four in an effort to put out the fire. The steam was used in preference to water so as not to cause as much damage to the cargo. The steam had no effect on the fire and I left the ship about 8:30 A.M. and stood on the dock in front of warehouse zero where I observed the ship for about ten minutes. I noticed the fire was growing worse and there was a great deal of deep orange colored smoke coming out of hold number four. I remember seeing empty fertilizer sacks flying out of hold number four and landing on the dock adjacent to the ship. About this time the volunteer firemen from Texas City arrived and started pouring water into the number four hold. The water had no effect on the fire and it was at this time I decided to leave the scene as I was afraid the ship would explode. I drove my auto home which was about three quarters of a mile from warehouse zero, and upon arriving at home about 9:15 A.M. I heard a terrific explosion which I determined later occurred aboard the SS Grandcamp.

"I have read and initialled this and four other pages which are true and correct to the best of my knowledge."

/s/"Clarence H. Wells"

/s/"Robert S. Baker, Special Agent, FBI, 1/29/58."

WELLS stated on January 29, 1958 that he was willing to testify under oath to the statement furnished by him on the same date.

SD 131-13

WELLS recalled that sometime in 1947 or 1948 he furnished a signed statement to an attorney from Houston, Texas by the name of THADDEUS GRUNDY. WELLS was not able to recall what firm or individual GRUNDY represented.

WELLS also advised that he furnished three or four other signed statements to attorneys from either Houston or Galveston, Texas, which attorneys were representing families of persons killed due to the explosion at Texas City, Texas. WELLS also stated that he vaguely recalled furnishing a statement to an attorney from Galveston, Texas, which attorney represented the Lykes Brothers Steamship Company. WELLS was unable to recall the names of any of the attorneys to whom he furnished signed statements except for GRUNDY.

SD 131-13

ENCLOSURES: TO HOUSTON

Original signed statement of CLARENCE HENRY WELLS  
at National City, California dated 1/29/58.

-RUC-

## Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

\*TO : DIRECTOR, FBI (131-363)

DATE: 1/31/58

FROM : SAC, SAN DIEGO (131-13)

SUBJECT: SS WILSON B. KEENE;  
SS HIGHFLYER; SS GRANDCAMP, etc.  
Admiralty Numbers 1868,  
1869, 1870  
ADMIRALTY MATTERS  
(OO: Houston)ENCLOSURES TO BUREAU:

Two (2) copies of the report of SA ROBERT S. BAKER  
dated and captioned as above.

Two (2) copies of a blank memorandum evaluating  
the potential capabilities of CLARENCE HENRY WELLS  
as a witness for the U. S. Government.

In addition, the following administrative data  
is being set forth:

An information copy of this report is not being  
furnished to Dallas inasmuch as a new signed statement has  
been obtained from the witness.

REFERENCES

Houston airtel to Bureau 1/23/58  
Bureau airtel to San Diego 1/27/58

② Bureau (Enc. -4)  
2 - Houston (Enc. -7)  
1 - San Diego

RECORDED-13

EX-126

RSB:mid  
(5)

1-31-363-91

6 FEB 5 1958

EX-126

ENCLOSURE

62 FEB 10 1958

FBI - SAN DIEGO



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

San Diego, California

January 31, 1958

In Reply, Please Refer to  
File No.

SS WILSON B. KEENE;  
SS HIGHFLYER; SS GRANDCAMP,  
Limitation of Liability, April 16 and  
17, 1947; Petitions of Lykes Brothers  
Steamship Company and Republic of France  
Southern Texas Admiralty Numbers  
1868, 1869, and 1870  
ADMIRALTY MATTERS

Clarence Henry Wells is a male white American, age 42, black hair, brown eyes, and of medium build. He is married and is the father of two children. He has the equivalence of a high school education. Wells has been employed for the past seven years as a dispatcher for the Southern California Freight Lines, San Diego, California. Wells, in the opinion of the interviewing agent, speaks distinctly, slowly, and is able to express himself clearly in connection with the Texas City disaster. He was able to recall the events surrounding the disaster very thoroughly and it is believed that he possesses the qualities necessary for a competent witness.

Wells was very cooperative with the interviewing agent and indicated he would be willing to use part of his annual two weeks vacation to travel to South Texas and testify as a witness for the United States Government if needed. He did point out that his wife is expecting a child to be born to her about February 5, 1958 and if his wife or new-born baby were in poor health at the time of the trial (March 4, 1958), it might work some hardship on him to be away from home for an extended period of time.

Lee Civil Dir  
7/5/58  
pkp

131-363-91  
ENCLOSURE

# FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Reporting Office HOUSTON	Office of Origin HOUSTON	DATE JAN 31 1958	Investigative Period 12/20; 1/16, 20-24/58
TITLE OF CASE SS WILSON B. KEENE; SS HIGH FLYER; SS GRANDCAMP; ADMIRALTY NUMBERS 1868, 1869, 1870		Report made by JOSEPH J. DOOLING	TYPED BY mfh
		CHARACTER OF CASE ADMIRALTY MATTER	

Synopsis:

ALFRED MANIS, JOHN W. BURNS, JAMES J. TROTTER, BEARD MOORE, EARL B. LEE, JAMES WILBURN NEWLIN, E. J. STINSON, JOYCE THOMAS FRENCH, NEAL CURTIS CLOUD, HENRY WILLIE DAVID, WILLIAM RICHARD LONG, JESSE L. NEWLIN were reinterviewed. They verified their signed statement given in 1948. Exceptions noted. Where they had knowledge they answered specific questions requested by Department.

- P -

DETAILS:

Approved Copies made	Special Agent in Charge	Do not write in spaces below	
2 - Bureau (131-363) 1 - USA, Houston 2 - Houston (131-39)		131-363-92	REC-62
		8 FEB 1958	

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65 FEB 1 1958  
Property of FBI - This report is loaned to you by the FBI, and neither it nor its contents are to be distributed outside the agency to which loaned.

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
INTERVIEW REPORT

Date: January 29, 1958

MR. EARL B. LEE, 500 Wisteria, La Marque, Texas, was interviewed at his residence. LEE advised that he presently recalls all of the information which he furnished to Special Agent JULIAN A. MARTIN on March 22, 1948, at Galveston, Texas, except certain items.

The following is the complete text of the reported interview in 1948. The portion of this text, which is underlined, is the portion which LEE can not now recall from memory:

General Experience

This witness can testify that he had been working as a longshoreman only a few days prior to April 15, 1947, that he never handled Ammonium Nitrate Fertilizer until he assisted in leading it on the GrandCamp. He had no idea that this fertilizer was dangerous and might explode. No special instructions were ever given him as to how to handle Ammonium Nitrate Fertilizer. He states that the material was handled very roughly in transferring it around.

Safety Regulations

This witness will testify that Ammonium Nitrate Fertilizer was contained in paper bags and that quite a few of the bags were broken and the loose material would be placed in new bags. He advises there were "No Smoking" signs in the warehouses and on the docks, and he did not see anyone smoking. No instructions were ever given him as to what he should do in case of fire.

Pertinent Period

This witness will testify that he started work on the night shift in the #2 hold of the GrandCamp on the first night that it was loaded which would have been April 11, 1947. His gang boss was named GUTHRIE. This witness' job was to load the sacks of fertilizer on trays which were then loaded

-2-

Interview with MR. EARL B. LEE File # HO 131-39on 1/21/58 at La Marque, Texas Date Dictated: 1/27/58by Special Agent CHOWDER SCOTT SMITH

into the #2 hold of the GrandCamp. He continued on the night shift at this work through Monday night, April 14, 1947. He states that quite a few of the bags were broken and that the loose fertilizer was placed in new bags. He does not recall any of the sacks of fertilizer being warm or hot. He does not remember seeing anyone smoking in the warehouse or on the docks while he was working on the GrandCamp; however, he did see longshoremen smoking on the dock of the GrandCamp. He says he observed the French crew members drinking whiskey on the GrandCamp on several occasions and walking around on the deck of the vessel and on the docks, apparently in a drunken condition. He states that either on Sunday night or Monday night, April 13, or 14, 1947, he stopped inside the cabin on the GrandCamp to take a smoke and saw some of the French crew members playing cards at a table, and there was a bottle of whiskey on the table from which they were drinking.

This witness reported for work at 7:00 A.M., April 16, 1947 and was assigned to the #5 hold of the High Flyer to load flour. His foreman was GUTHRIE. This witness' duties were in the #5 hold of the High Flyer. At approximately 7:45 A.M. on that morning, he was ordered to come out of the #5 hold of the High Flyer and work on the freight cars from which the flour was loaded. At approximately 8:30 or 8:45 A.M. he observed smoke coming over warehouse 0, and about 9:00 A.M. the gang boss told this witness and the other workers to cover up the #5 hatch on the High Flyer. This witness states that this hatch had a metal cover on it. After they had covered the #5 hatch and placed the canvas on it, this witness left the ship with the rest of the gang. He was told by some of the other gang members that the boss wanted them to stay around as they would resume work when the fire was under control. This witness walked over to the end of the slip where the GrandCamp was docked near warehouse 0. He stood there watching the fire coming from the GrandCamp. Warehouse 0 was not on fire. He had been at this place from one to five minutes when the explosion occurred. It threw this witness into the slip, and a very short time later, he felt himself rolling. He heard only the first explosion. The water washed him on land. He got up, walked a short distance, and was picked up by a nurse in a jeep station wagon, who took him to the vicinity of the place where he was staying in Texas City, which was 737 Seventh Avenue North. He then went to the clinic in Texas City where he was given

first aid and later was transferred to the John Sealy Hospital in Galveston, Texas. He was in this hospital in Galveston when the High Flyer exploded in the early morning of April 17, 1947. He remained in this hospital seven or eight days.

In addition LEE advised that he presently recalls the following additional facts:

Mr. LEE stated that he smoked on several occasions on the ship and recalls engaging the guard at the head of the gangway in conversation and that the guard also smoked. He said he does not recall if the guard was a Frenchman or an American.

Mr. LEE also advised that he was standing about 120 feet from the GrandCamp on the morning that she exploded, and observed black smoke coming out of a hatch just aft of the superstructure, starboard side. He said he helped the volunteer firemen string some of the hose out to battle the fire.

LEE gave the following responses to specific questions:

2a. LEE does not recall any of the French crew smoking on the deck, around the hatches, or in the hold.

2b. LEE recalls no longshoremen smoking in the holds.

2c. LEE recalls talking to a guard at the head of the gangway toward the GrandCamp and this guard was smoking. He does not know whether this guard was a Frenchman or an American. It should be noted, however, that he was talking to the guard in English.

2d. LEE states that he was under the impression that smoking was allowed aboard the GrandCamp. He said that whenever he desired to smoke he had to go aboard the ship to do so, since there was no smoking allowed on dock or in the warehouse area.

2e. LEE recalls seeing six to eight crew members in the galley aboard the GrandCamp and engaged in card playing and drinking. This drinking was from a bottle which he thought

contained whiskey or wine. LEE advised that one of the members offered him a drink on that occasion also, on occasions during the time LEE worked on the GrandCamp at night he noticed French crewmen come aboard in a drunken condition. LEE did not know anything about hold #4 in the GrandCamp and states he never observed the French master of the GrandCamp. LEE did not know the conditions of discipline aboard the GrandCamp.

2f. LEE had no recollection of combustible materials being stored in the same hold with ammonium nitrate.

2g. As LEE recalls it the cargo was generally referred to as fertilizer rather than nitrate.

2h. LEE had no knowledge of the quality or description of any of the ammunition aboard the GrandCamp.

2i. LEE does not recall if any acid was present in hold #3.

3. LEE stated that he would be proud to testify under oath in Federal Court as to the matter.

5. LEE stated that he has no recollection of anyone, other than the FBI, contacting him concerning this matter.

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
INTERVIEW REPORT

Date: January 29, 1958

BYARD MOORE, who resides at 1427 West Tenth Street, Freeport, Texas, was interviewed at his place of employment, Farm and Ranch Equipment Company, 205 Mulberry Street, Angleton, Texas.

The signed statement which he furnished agents in 1948 was reviewed by him in detail. This statement is set out below:

"Texas City, Texas  
March 17, 1948

"I, BYARD WOLVERTON MOORE, 731 Fourth Avenue North, Texas City, Texas make the following voluntary statements to MURRY C. FALKNER, who has identified himself to me as a Special Agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, US Department of Justice, knowing that they may be used in a court of law.

"I began working as a longshoreman at the Texas City Railway Terminal Docks in Texas City, Texas in the early part of April, 1947. During that month I worked on both the SS High Flyer and the SS GrandCamp at the said docks. My first work was loading flour in the hold of the SS High Flyer, where I worked for about three nights subsequent to about April 9, 1947. Sometime later, during the month of April, 1947, I worked in warehouse 0 loading ammonium nitrate on the SS GrandCamp. I worked at this job the last time on the night of April 14 and 15, 1947 beginning work at 6:00 P.M. on the first date and ending at about 4:30 or 5:00 A.M. on the second date.

"Previous to this time, I had not worked at handling ammonium nitrate. While working on the docks loading ammonium nitrate on the said SS GrandCamp, I noticed that the French sailors aboard this vessel seemed to be smoking all over the said ship.

-6-

Interview with BYARD MOORE

File # HO 131-39

Date Dictated: 1/27/58

on 1/22/58 at Angleton, Texas

by Special Agent HOMER R. HAUER: mfh

HO 131-49

"This ammonium nitrate was in brown colored paper sacks, each weighing about 90 to 100 lbs. The sacks contained the words, 'ammonium nitrate fertilizer', or something similar. When a sack would be broken in handling, it was my observation that the sack would be placed in the sling for loading aboard the said SS GrandCamp along with the sacks that were not broken. I would say that there were perhaps twenty such broken sacks during a night's work. I have noticed that from time to time it appeared that the sacks were already broken in the stacks of nitrate in the warehouse.

"No one ever stated to me that ammonium nitrate was dangerous. However, from knowledge gained during my service in the Artillery during the recent war, as well as from books that I have studied in school, I was under the impression that ammonium nitrate would explode. I never received any special instruction relative to the handling of ammonium nitrate. There were signs warning against smoking at various places in the warehouse. I did not smoke while employed in the warehouses and did not observe anyone else doing so.

"On the morning of April 16, 1948 I returned to the docks seeking work, but was told that there was no work for me that day. I had occasion at this time to pass near the SS GrandCamp and observed nothing unusual. I saw no fire or smoke. This was shortly after 7:00 A.M. on said date. Upon finding that there was no work for me, I returned to my home, where I was at the time of the explosion. I was also at my home the following morning when the SS High Flyer exploded.

"I have carefully read the above statement consisting of two typewritten pages which is true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

"/s/ BYARD WOLERTON MOORE

"WITNESS:  
"/s/ MURRY C. KALKNER"

MOORE advised that he recalls he saw French seamen smoking on the deck of the SS GrandCamp at the time he was working as a longshoreman at the Texas City Railway Terminal Docks. He advised that he had never seen a longshoreman smoking in the hold of this ship. He stated that in connection with the inquiry concerning the presence or absence of a French guard or watchman to prevent smoking on this ship, there was no such person to his knowledge. He stated that he had never received any special instructions regarding smoking on the SS GrandCamp.

MOORE stated that he has no evidence of drinking on the part of the French crew, that he saw no one drunk aboard the SS GrandCamp, that he has no information concerning a wine closet in hold #4 of this ship. In addition, he stated the French crewmen appeared to him to be acting as they should have been, since there was no "horseplay" apparent. He stated he believes he saw the French Master on one or possibly two occasions during the time he was working on the SS GrandCamp, and that on none of these occasions did he ever see this person smoking or drinking.

MOORE was unable to furnish any information concerning any combustible materials being stored in the same hold, below or between decks, with the ammonium nitrate. He stated that the material being loaded on the SS GrandCamp was referred to as fertilizer rather than nitrate. MOORE advised he has no knowledge concerning any ammunition or acid being aboard the SS GrandCamp.

MOORE stated he is willing to testify under oath in accordance with the information in the statement previously furnished by him provided he is definitely able to recall the information contained therein.

MOORE advised he has never been contacted or interviewed by anyone other than the FBI in connection with this matter.

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
INTERVIEW REPORT

Date: January 29, 1958

JAMES J. TROTTER, who resides at 1817 Fourth Avenue North, Texas City, Texas, telephone number 5-6721, and who is employed by Carbide Carbon Chemical Company, as a sub-foreman, was interviewed at his place of employment.

The signed statement which he gave in 1948 was reviewed by him in detail and is set out below:

"Texas City, Texas  
March 12, 1948

"I, JAMES J. TROTTER, make the following statement to JULIAN A. MARTIN, Special Agent, Federal Bureau of Investigation. I realize that this statement may be used in court.

"I am 21 years of age, single, and live at  
512 Texas Avenue, Texas City, Texas.

"Prior to the explosion on April 16, 1947, I had been working as a longshoreman since January, 1947. During that period I had helped in loading three ships with fertilizer or ammonium nitrate. We commonly referred to this material as 'fertilizer.' I usually worked on the docks loading the material from the warehouses onto the trays. I worked a few times in the holds of the ships stacking the material when it was lowered into the hold on the trays. When the GrandCamp started loading nitrate at dock 0 I was working on the night shift. I believe I started working on the night of April 11, 1947, worked three nights, the last being on the night of April 13, 1947. The first night I worked in the No. 4 Hold of the ship on the inshore side loading fertilizer. I did not work on the night of April 14, 1947, and on the morning of April 15, 1947, I started working at 8:00 a.m. on the Wilson B. Keene at Dock B, where we were cleaning up the ship getting ready to load flour into it. I reported for work

Interview with **JAMES J. TROTTER** File # **HO 131-39**

on 1/24/58 at THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO:

by Special Agent JOSEPH J. DOOLING:mfh

"on the docks at the Keene at 8:00 a.m. on April 16, 1947. Shortly after the deck crew had opened the holds, I heard that there was a fire on the GrandCamp. I was told to stand by on the docks until the hatches had been covered. I was then told by my gang boss, BILL CORNETT, to knock off and come back at 1:00 p.m. on that day if the fire was under control. I then walked over to Dock 0 with JOHNNY BEARD and WARREN THOMPSON and we walked to within about 125 feet of the stern of the GrandCamp, where we stood watching it, by the side of Warehouse 0. We stood there some four or five minutes when the ship exploded. I regained consciousness at a point about 300 feet in back of where I was standing. I got up and walked into Terns City not realizing that I was injured. Later, examination showed that I had a fractured left hip, my left eardrum was ruptured, a piece of metal had gone through my right arm, and I had some scratches and burns. The other two boys who were with me were both killed. I have not filed any claims against any insurance company and have not turned my case over to an attorney.

"I never saw anyone smoking on the docks, in the warehouses, or on the deck or in the holds of the ships which were loading nitrate or fertilizer. I have smoked on the ships and have seen others smoking in the galley way, where smoking was allowed. The GrandCamp did not have any signs on it prohibiting smoking that I saw. Neither did it have a guard on it. The other three ships which I helped load nitrate into had guards on them. The fertilizer which we loaded into the GrandCamp appeared to be the same in all respects to that which we loaded in the other three ships. No one ever told me that the fertilizer was explosive or dangerous and we handled it in the same manner in which we had handled other cargo of a similar nature. It was treated roughly; the bags being thrown from one spot to another. Although I have never seen

"any of the nitrate burn, it was commonly understood among the crew members whom I worked with in the hold of the GrandCamp that it was inflamable. We did not smoke in the hold of the GrandCamp during the one night that I worked there.

"On the nights of April 12 and 13, 1947, I saw members of the crew on the GrandCamp coming aboard the ship with whiskey bottles in their possession. Some of these would have pint bottles in their back pockets and some would be carrying a bottle in a paper sack. I did not see any of them drinking the whiskey. I saw some of the crew members staggering, both on the docks and aboard the ship. I also saw some of the crew members from this ship drinking beer in some of the beer joints in the neighborhood of the docks.

"The bags which contained the fertilizer all had the same label on them, namely, 'Fertilizer, ammonium nitrate, 32.5% nitrogen.' While working on the docks and loading the GrandCamp, my job was to help load the trays, which held 25 bags. The checker for the terminal company, who was a Mexican, would point out to us where we would load the trays for each particular load. In loading for the GrandCamp on the nights of April 12 and 13, I noticed that the checker would designate piles from which we would load the trays in several different sections of the warehouse O. I don't know why this was done as it is usually the practice to load an entire car load of nitrate once we get started on it. A car load of this material is placed in a separate pile in the warehouse. Sometimes there was as many as 6 piles or car loads to a section. We loaded the fertilizer onto the trays from about 15 different piles on the nights of April 12 and 13. We also loaded the fertilizer from about 7 box cars. There were four of us working in the crew loading the trays and when the material was taken out of the box cars a tray would be placed at the door of the car as near to the sacks as we could get it,

HO 131-39

"and two men would go in the car and load the bags onto the tray. The other two men would arrange it on the tray so that it would be neatly stacked. We would then alternate and the other two would load the next tray. I would estimate that we found from eight to ten bags broken in each car. We would set the broken bags aside and after we finished loading a car, we would pour that which remained in the broken bags into a new bag, sweep up the loose fertilizer, and put it into the new bags, and would then tie up the top of the sack. There was no sack never on the crew when the GrandCamp was being loaded, so the work of putting the loose fertilizer into new bags was done by us. On the previous three ships which I helped load fertilizer into, there was a man who did take care of this.

"I noticed that the bags of fertilizer which we removed from box cars being always warm, but not too hot to be handled with bare hands. All the bags appeared to be the same color and I did not notice any parts of any bags which were discolored. Some of the bags on the bottom layer of the box cars would sometimes be damp or moist. In the middle of the load of bags in the box cars we would find a few of the bags which appeared to be brittle. The outside covering on about five or ten per cent of these did crack when we handled them, but only eight or ten bags out of an entire car load would spill any of their contents from this breakage by handling.

"I do not know what caused the fire on the GrandCamp or the explosion.

"I have read the above statement, consisting of two pages, and sign it knowing it to be true.

"Signed JAMES J. TROTTER

"WITNESSED:

"*/s/ JULIAN A. MARTIN, F.B.I.*"

TROTTER had the following observations concerning this signed statement:

At the conclusion of the fourth paragraph of his signed statement he states, "It was commonly understood among the crew members whom I worked with in the hold of the GrandCamp that it was inflammable." TROTTER stated that in order to clarify this it should be longshoremen rather than crew members in order not to confuse this with the crew members of the GrandCamp. Also in the immediate part of the signed statement following this part, TROTTER stated that on April 12 and 13 he saw members of the crew of the GrandCamp aboard the ship with whiskey bottles in their possession. TROTTER stated that this probably should be liquor bottles rather than whiskey bottles. TROTTER knows it was an intoxicant but since he did not see the label or drink any of it, it could have been any type of liquor.

In response to specific questions put to him TROTTER made the following answers:

2a. TROTTER did not recall any smoking on deck, around the hatches, or in the hold by the French crew. He pointed out, however, that he, TROTTER, was a signalman in the United States Navy. He did not recall any Baker flag flying on the GrandCamp. He actually does not know if they did or did not smoke in those areas.

2b. The longshoremen did not smoke in the hold. TROTTER himself smoked at that time and he never smoked in the hold. He believes he did smoke on the GrandCamp in the galley area and on vessels where flour was being loaded. The longshoremen smoked aboard the vessel but TROTTER does not think anyone smoked on the GrandCamp because ammonium nitrate was inflammable. At the conclusion of this question TROTTER stated that he did not believe he smoked aboard the GrandCamp but could not swear to it at this time.

2c. TROTTER stated that there was no French guard or watchman aboard the vessel to prevent smoking.

HO 1313-39

As a matter of fact, there was no guard at all aboard the vessel.

2d. Longshoremen were never given any special instructions concerning smoking on the GrandCamp; however, it was generally understood that longshoremen were not supposed to smoke.

2e. In regard to the demeanor of the French crew and master TROTTER stated that he could add nothing to his previous signed statement except that the Frenchmen did not talk to them and that the Frenchmen had a generally "big time" and were loud on occasions.

2f. There was binder twine in hold #4 or #5. TROTTER believes it to have been located in hold #4 tween decks on the aft side. TROTTER stated that as a matter of fact he never saw the master of the French crew and that the only ones he ever saw were the crewmen or the ordinary seamen. In regard to binder twine previously mentioned, after some recollection, TROTTER stated that he believed a portion or all of hold #5 was secured or locked. He can not recall whether it was the lower deck or the hatch cover. TROTTER could not elaborate on this or explain how any loading operation could have taken place with the hatch cover secured.

2g. About one-half the time the longshoremen referred to the cargo as ammonium nitrate and other half of the time they called it fertilizer.

2h. As to the ammunition aboard the GrandCamp, TROTTER stated that his knowledge is only hearsay. He heard someone tell him that something had been unloaded from the vessel after the fire started. He had been informed after the explosion that it was 45 ammunition.

2i. TROTTER stated that he may have been in hold #3 at one time or another but believes the majority of his time was on hold #4, and he can never recall seeing any acid aboard the GrandCamp.

3. TROTTER stated that he would testify to all these matters.

5. TROTTER stated that to his knowledge he has never discussed this matter officially to anyone other than the FBI.

TROTTER stated that he was not actually looking at the GrandCamp the moment it blew up but that he had been standing between two of his friends at the time of the explosion talking to them. He was approximately 125 feet from the stern of the vessel when it exploded. He was blown about 300 yards away and all of his clothing, with the exception of his shoes and stockings and the elastic band around his waist from his underwear, were completely removed from his body as a result of the explosion. In this unclothed condition he walked to his home, put on fresh clothes, and wandered downtown in a dazed condition. He was picked up, went to the hospital where he remained eight days. He stated his body was covered with oil, molasses, and mud from the explosion and it was not until he was in the hospital that he realized he had been injured. TROTTER stated that he was so thankful he survived this explosion he never put in a complaint to anyone for his injuries.

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
INTERVIEW REPORT

Date: January 29, 1958

JOHN WILSON BURNS, who resides at 805 Eleventh Avenue North, Texas City, and is employed by Republic Oil and Refinery as a maintenance worker at Texas City, was interviewed in a Bureau automobile on Texas Avenue.

The signed statement which BURNS gave in 1948 was reviewed by him in detail and is set out below:

"Texas City, Texas  
March 11, 1948

"I, JOHN W. BURNS, make this voluntary statement to FRANK L. GRIEBS and BOY T. GOODMAN, Special Agents of the FBI, knowing that the same can be used in a court of law.

"I reside at 1132-7th Avenue, South, Texas City, Texas. I have been working as a longshoreman off and on since 1940. I worked on the Grand Camp and as I remember worked the night shift on Monday and Tuesday, April 14 and 15, 1947, getting off at 6:00 AM on the morning of April 16, 1947. I worked on No. 2 Hatch and CLARENCE DANNAR was the foreman, however, I worked only in the warehouse. I also worked one day which I think was Sunday, April 13, 1947, on the High Flyer, also in the warehouse. While I am not sure I think I worked one or two shifts in which I doubled up on the Wilson B. Keene. I cannot recall for sure but I think it was on the Grand Camp that the crew I was with shifted some binder twine from one hatch to another to make room for more cargo. I never have worked any place loading this nitrate or fertilizer except in the warehouse, although I have worked on several crews that were loading these ships.

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Interview with JOHN WILSON BURNS File # MO 131-39

on 1/22/58 at Texas City, Texas Date Dictated: 1/27/58

by Special Agent JOSEPH J. DOOLING :mfp

"When we left at 6:00 AM the morning of April 16, 1947, I do not remember whether we covered the No. 2 Hatch or not. On leaving the ship I passed by No. 4 Hatch of the Grand Camp when I went down the wharf and I noticed nothing unusual and did not see any smoke at that time.

"No instructions were ever given to me as to how to handle this nitrate and it was never considered by the men who worked there as being dangerous. We usually put twenty-seven bags on each tray that was being lifted by the winches into the ships. Generally we were told to rebag any bags that were broken. In the warehouse we would set such bags aside and a cleanup man would rebag them. Any bags which were slightly torn but when the fertilizer was not running out we would go ahead and load them. I remember that the bags were marked with the words, Ammonium Nitrate Fertilizer, 32% Nitrogen and I believe there was something on the bags about El Dorado, Arkansas. I have loaded these bags direct from box cars to the boats but this was not the usual practise. In handling these bags in the warehouse the only defect generally noted would be an occasional torn or broken sack. This was also true of the box cars. I do not remember finding any sacks discolored. Sometimes the sacks which were down in the pile always would be quite warm but they could be handled barehanded. I have also found sacks of flour which were warm when they were covered with several other sacks.

"We were paid a ten cent differential pay for handling this nitrate. This was not because it was considered dangerous but because it would burn the hands and would irritate any scratches and because it was sometimes quite dusty. I remember one time during the noon hour when a discussion came up about whether this would burn or not I tried to burn some of it on the ground up near the wharf and when putting a match to it the match would just go out.

HO 131-39

"There were 'No Smoking' signs all over the warehouse and there was a \$50 fine attached to a violation of this regulation. The walking foreman and the gang foreman would frequently warn the men against smoking. On the Grand Camp I do not recall CLARENCE BAKER, the gang foreman, or JOHN HOWE, the walking foreman, giving any particular instructions regarding smoking. I do remember one time on another ship loading this fertiliser, SAN CARLOS, the foreman, issued a warning against smoking. However, every once in awhile some of the men would sneak a smoke and I have smelled cigarette smoke in the warehouse when we were doing this loading. I do not remember ever seeing any 'No Smoking' signs on the Grand Camp.

"In the warehouse this nitrate or fertilizer was always stored by itself, that is with an aisle or a bulkway between it and other material.

"In loading the Grand Camp and the High Flyer, the usual practice was followed and no different procedure was put into practice other than that which had been used on similar cargo in the past. The Grand Camp, however, was more of a rundown boat than the others, by that I mean it needed paint and its general appearance from the outside was that of a boat not well kept. Also, the few members of the crew that I saw looked dirty and not clean, snappy and alert as on other boats. I remember seeing a penguin the last night I worked on this boat which made we think the boat had been somewhere in the South seas.

"I have read the above statement consisting of two pages and have signed each page.

"/s/ JOHNIE W. BURNS  
JOHN W. BURNS

"WITNESSED:

"/s/ ROY T. MOONAN, FBI.

"/s/ FRANK L. GRUBBS, FBI."

BURNS made the following corrections to this signed statement:

1. BURNS worked as a longshoreman from 1945 to 1947; therefore the date 1940 should have read 1945.

2. In the signed statement he stated that he had found sacks of flour which were warm. BURNS states he does not now recall ever handling any flour which was warm.

Also in the signed statement he said that every once in awhile some of the men would sneak a smoke. In this regard he was referring to the warehouse area. BURNS states he can not now recall the men sneaking a smoke in the warehouse area.

2a - d. BURNS can not make any statement regarding smoking by the French crew or longshoremen or the presence or absence of French guards or special instructions concerning smoking on the GrandCamp as he, BURNS, was a warehouseman and only went aboard the GrandCamp on one occasion.

2e. BURNS has no recollection as to the action of the French crew or master and never saw any of them drinking or drunk. He was never in the hold of any of the vessels and never saw the French captain. As a matter of fact he only saw a few of the French crew members.

2f,h,i. BURNS has no knowledge of combustible materials in the holds with ammonium nitrate; also, he has no knowledge of ammunition aboard the GrandCamp or acid in hold #3 as he was never in any of the holds on the GrandCamp.

2g. The cargo on the GrandCamp was known as ammonium nitrate fertilizer but generally referred to as fertilizer.

3. BURNS stated that he would testify under oath as to the information given in this matter.

5. BURNS stated that to his knowledge he has never been contacted by anyone other than the FBI in this regard.

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
INTERVIEW REPORT

Date: January 30, 1958

ALFRED MANIS, 2324 Seventh Avenue North, Texas City, who is employed by Galveston County on the road gang was interviewed at his residence. The interview conducted in 1948 was reviewed word for word with him. The following is the result of that interview:

Background of Witness

This witness is 53 years of age, married and has nine children. He suffered injuries and has signed a release for the Lykes Brothers Steamship Company. He has talked to a number of men about the incident, one who represented the Texas City Terminal Railway Company and another who represented the Labor Relations Board, but he does not recall their identities. He gave signed statements to both of these individuals.

General Experience

This witness has been a longshoreman since about 1921. During this time, he has unloaded nitrate from freight cars and taken it into warehouses and he has also worked as a winchman. He has never received any special instructions about the handling of this type of cargo and was unaware of the fact that there was any danger of it exploding.

Safety Regulations

The bags containing nitrate were labeled "Ammonium Nitrate" and "Fertilizer". He has observed "No Smoking" signs posted all over the warehouses. He has never smoked there and has never observed anyone else smoking in any of the warehouses.

Pertinent Period

On April 16, 1947, this witness was working on the High Flyer on the day shift from 8 A.M. until 10 P.M. He was

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Interview with ALFRED MANIS File # HQ 131-39on 1/22/58 at Texas City, Texas Date Dictated: 1/27/58by Special Agent JOSEPH J. DOOLING:mfh

running the winch on #5 Hatch, when he received word that the Grand Camp was on fire. He personally noticed this fire about 8:35 A.M. He called HARVEY REAGAN, walking foreman, and told him about the fire on the Grand Camp. He came out of #5 Hatch and passed on orders to cover up the hatches and batten them down and then to get out on the docks and await orders. The last words he heard REAGAN speak were that he was going to the Grand Camp to try to get the men away from there. He was killed by the explosion.

The witness and the other man left the High Flyer at about 8:45 A.M. after battening down the hatches and they then followed their foreman, HARRY LEMM (phonetic) around to the Grand Camp. Witness helped hook all of the fire hose up for the Grand Camp which was located at Dock "G". After finishing up with the fire hose, a Mr. NUMEZ, voluntary fireman, who was a member of the Texas City Terminal, came up with a ladder and witness helped him place the ladder against the side of the Grand Camp so that the voluntary firemen could go aboard.

At this time, witness asked NUMEZ why they didn't open up the sea cocks on the ship and sink it. NUMEZ stated there was ammunition aboard in #5 Hatch and that the crew had run off and left the ship and he did not know where the sea cocks might be located. Everybody pitched in and tried to save property because it meant meat and bread to all of them. Witness states that one of the reasons so many were killed was because so many stayed to help.

Witness can testify that there was fire hose on the Grand Camp but there was no one aboard to hook it up and the pumps were not working.

CHESTER HOFF, walking foreman, and the witness walked over to the west end of Dock "G" and ammunition started popping in the #5 Hatch. Witness states he could tell it was ammunition by the sound of it. At about 9:12 A.M., the Grand Camp blew up, killing a number of men standing near where the witness was. Witness was injured pretty badly, but managed to go for help. Ammunition started popping again and he watched the ship start tearing to pieces and observed a piece of steel hit the Monsanto Chemical Plant and set it afire.

Men started running around on the docks and someone hollered "Lie down". Before he could lie down, a human body hit the witness and knocked him down in a hole, which he believes saved his life. The tidal wave caused by the explosion washed over him. Right after this, when the tidal wave had receded, #4 Hatch on the Grand Camp exploded, which was followed by a gust of smoke and witness was knocked down again.

Witness states that longshoremen's regulations require that when there is a dangerous cargo, a red flag should be flown and there was no red flag displayed when the nitrate was being loaded.

Inasmuch as he did not go aboard the Grand Camp, he does not know whether there were any "No Smoking" signs posted. He further cannot recall whether there were any such signs on the High Flyer; however, he remembers that on the front of one ship which was loaded just before the GRAND CAMP, the name of which he does not remember, he does recall a "No smoking" sign right at the gangway. He also observed one of the crew members was right by the gangway smoking. In fact, he saw French seamen running all over the ship on deck and they were smoking there and in the holds. Witness was in room 126 of St. Joseph's Hospital, Houston, Texas, early the next morning when the High Flyer exploded.

MANIS made the following comments concerning that previous interview:

1. CLARKICK SIDNEY HOFF and CHESTER HOFF were present when MANIS walked over to the west end of the dock hold and the ammunition started popping in the #5 hatch. MANIS stated that he knew it was ammunition popping not only from the sound of it but because he had been previously told by JOHNNIE FURST, the dock policeman, that it was ammunition. FURST told him this while he, MANIS, and MAYS, the constable, both were talking together. He informed that both FURST and MAYS were killed in the explosion.

Also MANIS now recalls that there were no smoking signs aboard the High Flyer which is contrary to his statement previously given. MANIS does not recall any members of the

HO 1131-39

area smoking; however, he and the other longshoreman smoked in the gallery.

MANIS stated that he helped to hook up the fire hose which were located in the warehouse area. He helped to do this because he was aware of the location of the fire hose. As he recalled it, some four or five hose were connected and he carried the hose over and passed the nozzles up to the ship aboard the GrandCamp. He thinks two of the hose went in the forward end and two of the hose went in the aft end of hold #4. He stated that they poured water in for quite awhile in hold #4 but that he never went aboard the GrandCamp and never saw the water being poured in. He reiterated that after hooking up the hose he passed the nozzles up to the ship and then left the area and went west from the vessel. He, therefore, never actually saw water being poured into the hold.

In connection with the statement previously given that the pumps were not working, he was referring to the pumps aboard the GrandCamp. He knew that they were not working because MUÑEZ told him so. He did not actually see them, it being noted he was never aboard the GrandCamp at that time. He is positive that these were the pumps he was talking about as the nozzles which he hooked up were on the pier and did not depend on pressure or pumps in the immediate area to force the water through the hose. He described them the same as an ordinary fire hydrant; merely hook up the hose and turn on the hydrant and the water pours out without any pump or pressure necessary in the area.

MANIS stated that BILL THOMPSON (WILLIAM KESTON THOMPSON) discovered the fire and he, MANIS, knew he was killed in the blast.

2a. MANIS has no knowledge as to smoking on the deck, around the hatches, or in the hold by the French crew members.

2b. MANIS was not in the hold of the GrandCamp and has no knowledge as to smoking by the longshoremen.

HO 131-39

2c-e. MANIS has no knowledge other than previously stated as to the presence of French guards, special instructions concerning smoking on the GrandCamp or the demeanor of French crew members and the French master.

2f. MANIS stated that there was sulphur in hold #2 or #3 of the GrandCamp.

2g. The cargo was generally referred to as fertilizer; however, it was known as fertilizer or nitrate.

2h. Regarding ammunition aboard the GrandCamp, MANIS could not elaborate, other than that previously given.

2i. MANIS had no knowledge of any acid in hold #3.

3. MANIS stated that he would do his best to tell the truth at any trial.

5. MANIS stated that no one else had contacted him concerning this matter other than the FBI. At the conclusion of the interview MANIS stated that he did not desire to give a signed statement in view of his previous signed statement given to the FBI in this matter.

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
INTERVIEW REPORT

Date: January 30, 1958

DAN L. MITCHELL, who resides at 2318 Seventh Avenue North, Texas City, and is employed by S.T.P. doing construction work at Monsanto Chemical Company at Texas City, was interviewed at his place of employment.

The previous interview in 1948 concerning this witness is set out below:

General Experience

This witness has never had any experience handling ammonium nitrate fertilizer.

Safety Regulations

This witness has no knowledge with reference to how ammonium nitrate fertilizer is sacked or regarding smoking regulations and the violation of such regulations in the warehouses and on board boats in the Port of Texas.

Pertinent Period

Mr. MITCHELL was a member of the Texas City Heights Volunteer Fire Department for six years prior to April 16, 1947. His testimony as set out in his signed statement is as follows:

"On April 16, 1947 between 8:30 and 9:00 AM I was riding in my car in Texas City when I heard the fire siren and saw smoke coming from the water front. I drove my car there and got there at the same time as the fire truck. We stretched our hose - two hose from each truck and obtained the water to fight the fire by hard suction from the bay. Fire was pretty rough at that time. It was all coming from the number #4 hatch. We could not get down in there. I went all over the Grand Camp trying to find additional hose. The Grand Camp had practically no fire fighting apparatus at all. Apparently the French sailors had made no attempt at all to fight the fire. The only hose on the boat had never been taken off the rack. It was only

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Interview with DAN L. MITCHELL File # HO 131-39

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on 1/24/58 at Texas City, Texas Date Dictated: 1/27/58

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by Special Agent JOSEPH J. DOOLING:mfh

HO 131-39

a small 1½ inch 50 foot hose. I stretched this out and it was not long enough to reach to the #4 hold. When I turned the water on none would come out so apparently the Frenchmen had never turned on the pressure pump. When we got there all the French sailors were jumping off the boat. I feel sure the fire could have been put out when it first started if action had been taken at once and water put on the fire.

While we were fighting the fire the four HATTENBACK brothers, all of whom were killed in the explosion, who were longshoremen told me that there was quite a lot of ammunition in the number #4 hold and that some of the cases were so large that four men were not able to move one case. I later saw some empty cartridge cases on the ground which I thought had been taken from the boat.

Besides our Texas City Fire Department, the Republic Fire Department truck was there and had their hose on the Grand Camp obtaining their water by hard suction and I think the Texas City Terminal Railroad Company had their hose on the Grand Camp obtaining their water from fire plugs.

After I had fought the fire for awhile, I reported to the Fire Chief and told him I had to go to Galveston. He said they had plenty of men to fight the fire and for me to go on and come back as soon as I could to relieve some of the other men as fire on ships sometime lasts a long time. I then left in my car for Galveston and when I got a few miles out on the highway at the overpass I heard the explosion and thought that the ship had blown up. I went on into Galveston and saw some ambulances and told them they had better hurry to Texas City. I also went by the Galveston Fire Department and asked them to go to Texas City to fight the fire. I returned to Texas City in about an hour and helped the rest of the time moving the dead and wounded."

MANIS stated that he was a service station employee at the time of the fire and was a member of the Volunteer Fire Department. He had no knowledge of the Grand Camp or any of the loading activities. He merely heard the siren, saw the smoke, and went to the scene of the fire.

He left the scene of the fire before the explosion because he had some other business to attend to and as a result he was one of the two men who survived the explosion. The other man, DICK WILSON, who was also a member of the Volunteer Fire Department and who survived, has since died not as a result of the explosion.

MANIS stated that the 50 feet section of 1½ inch line on the wall of the GrandCamp had no pressure on it. It was located in the companionway and was never used. Further, there was a 50 feet section of hose on the bow end of the vessel which was never used as there was no connection for this hose.

MANIS stated that there were 45 caliber shells aboard the vessel and he never saw any larger than that size. MANIS stated that from what he saw, the French would not fight the fire. Further, in his opinion the ship was not equipped to fight the fire. When he was aboard the vessel part of the hatch in hold #4 was opened and they were pouring water in hold #4 when he was there. The deck was not at that time. MANIS stated he spent quite a bit of his time trying to locate fire fighting equipment aboard the GrandCamp which he was not able to find.

At the conclusion of the interview MANIS stated that he would be very happy to cooperate in this matter and to testify; however, he was interviewed on his half-hour lunch period and requested that he not be asked to sign a second signed statement for the FBI in this regard. He pointed out that he gets paid by the hour and that any loss of time costs him money.

On January 23, 1958, inquiry at the Houston Press newspaper, Houston, Texas, reflected that ROBERT OVERSTREET, former Press staff writer, is now with Overstreet and Bradfoot, 4506 Montrose, Houston, Texas. Efforts to locate him on that date reflected that he was not in town and was expected back on January 28, 1958.

The following is a complete text of the article written on May 2, 1947, in The Houston Press by ROBERT OVERSTREET:

"GRAND CAMP LOADED HERE BEFORE BLAST;  
PORT RULES BARRED NITRATE

"By ROBERT OVERSTREET  
"Press Staff Writer

"Terminal operators of Port Houston decided in August, 1946, that ammonium nitrate fertilizer was hazardous and that the proper facilities for handling it were lacking.

"Houstonians today have good reason to be thankful for the caution of their terminal operators.

"Arrived Week Before

"The French ship Grand Camp which exploded in Texas City and set off a series of blasts which killed more than 700 and injured more than 3000, loaded cargoes in Port Houston one week before that fateful moment in Texas City.

"On April 7, the Grand Camp arrived in Houston and tied up at city wharf No. 4. For three days she loaded cotton, peanuts, oil well machinery, plane parts and a scismographic unit bound for Le Havre, France.

"Not Part of Cargo

"Ammonium nitrate fertilizer - considered to have caused the blasts which rocked Texas City - was not part of the cargo loaded in Houston.

"Why? Because more than nine months ago someone noticed the word 'nitrate' on a bag which was labeled 'Fertilizer, NOT DANGEROUS,' and differed with those words describing the bag's contents.

"Soon afterward, two of the private terminal operators (who asked today that their names be withheld) collaborated and hired a chemist to analyze the fertilizer.

"Declared It Hazardous

"As a result of this analysis, the terminal operators decided that nitrate fertilizer was hazardous and that if they were to comply with underwriter's specifications, they had no proper facilities for handling it.

"Prior to last August, the fertilizer was stored in warehouses along with whatever happened to be on hand. In many cases it was stored beside inflammable material. But, because underwriter's specifications state that nitrates be isolated within the confines of a firewall, the operators decided to get rid of what they had on hand and not to handle any more for lack of suitable facilities.

"On April 10, the Grand Camp left Houston. Its destination was Texas City. There, on April 11, she began to take on a cargo of ammonium nitrate fertilizer.

"On April 16, at 8 a.m., fire was discovered in the No. 4 hold where nitrate had been stored.

"At 9:12, the whole world knew what took place."

This information concerning OVERSTREET and the article was obtained from MIKE DORMAN, Press Reporter.

On January 23, 1958, inquiry at the Longreach Docks reflected that T. H. COLEY, not JOHN C. COOLEY, is an official in that dock and has been one for approximately 25 years. He is out of town on a trip and is expected to return on January 27 or 28, 1958.

On January 23, 1958, JOHN MAYFIELD was contacted at his company, John Mayfield and Company, 195 Ingraham. He stated that his daughter was to be married on January 25, 1958, and that he was then in the process of making many arrangements to accomplish this event. He requested such interview be held in abeyance until after he got his daughter married off.

On January 24, 1958, Mr. JAMES E. ROSS contacted Special Agent JOSEPH J. DOOLING concerning investigation as a result of the Houston Press article. Mr. ROSS stated that he wished that such investigation be temporarily held up until he could talk with Mr. DALE GREEN of the Department. Mr. ROSS stated that as a result of his previous interview with Captain WYNNE, he feels that the article is not factual and investigation therein would not be productive.

On January 23, 1958, Mr. DALE GREEN telephonically contacted Special Agent JOSEPH J. DOOLING concerning this case. Mr. GREEN asked that he be furnished copies or photostatic copies of signed statements previously given in this matter by WILLIAM THOMPSON, LEROY HASKELL WOMACK, and MAURICE LE BROZEC.

Copies of these signed statements were made available to Mr. GREEN. Mr. GREEN also stated that he desired investigation directed to the Marine Fire Fighting Situation in connection with this case.

By letter dated January 23, 1958, Mr. JAMES E. ROSS, Assistant United States Attorney, Houston, requested that the following investigation be conducted:

In preparation for trial on March 4, 1958, in this matter we would much appreciate your locating for us an expert witness from Saybolt Laboratories who can testify substantially as follows:

(1) That ammonium nitrate fertilizer which contains not less than 32.5% nitrogen is actually about 94% more or less pure ammonium nitrate, and that pure ammonium nitrate salt is 65% ammonium and 35% nitrogen.

(2) That ammonium nitrate will ignite at approximately 400 degrees Fahrenheit, and that the temperature of the fire in a lighted cigarette is between 2,000 and 3,000 degrees centigrade. (We have heard this is the right temperature for a cigarette fire, but we do not know this to be true.)

(3) That many steamship interests including ships' agents and ships' captains, as well as owners, call upon Saybolt Laboratories for chemical analysis of cargoes which they intend to transport, including data on flash points, combustible natures and chemical properties as well as advice on any special precautions to be taken, or methods of fighting fires.

In the report of November 18, 1957, made by S.A. B. Tom Carter of your Dallas office regarding an interview with Mrs. Louise Reesby, on page 3, par. 2, it is stated that J. D. Latta handled several shipments of ammonium nitrate prior to the Texas City explosion, and that she never saw anything indicating it was dangerous and never heard it was dangerous. She should be reinterviewed to determine whether she knew prior to the Texas City explosion that the cargo was ammonium nitrate, and whether J. D. Latta had had correspondence with the French Supply Counsel, either incoming or outgoing, in which the commodity was referred to as ammonium nitrate prior to the Texas City explosion. The bills of lading subsequently issued by the office of J. D. Latta referred to this cargo as "ammonium nitrate fertilizer". Previous to the loading of the SS GRANDCAMP, the French Vessels LT. J. LEMUR and the SS ARGEATAN had been loaded with this cargo at Texas City, Texas, and the bills of lading were issued by J. D. Latta and Company. This witness should be asked whether she remembers the designation on the bills of lading for the two prior vessels, and if not, whether

she recalls that there were any differences in the previous bills of lading and those issued for the GRANDCAMP. This reinterview is necessary because in depositions taken subsequently to the original interview of this witness, all employees of the French Supply Counsel have denied any knowledge that the cargo contained ammonium nitrate even in a small percentage. J. D. Latta's office received all of this information through French Supply Counsel, and it is necessary that we establish that French Supply Counsel had referred to this commodity as ammonium nitrate or ammonium nitrate fertilizer prior to the Texas City explosion.

This same point requires a short reinterview of Arthur Clark in Brownsville, Texas. On page 6 of S.A. Joseph J. Dooling's report made on November 2, 1957, in the last paragraph, Clark said that ammonium nitrate was being shipped for French Supply Counsel on the GRANDCAMP and the HIGHFLYER and several shipments had been sent prior to the explosion. Clark should be asked whether he knew prior to the explosion the commodity was ammonium nitrate. Had the French Supply Counsel told him it was ammonium nitrate? Did the bills of lading on the LT. J. LEMUR and the ARGEATAM referred to the commodity as ammonium nitrate fertilizer, or show the name "ammonium nitrate"? Had Mr. Mountford at French Supply Counsel told him it was ammonium nitrate? Does he recall Peter Albert? Had Peter Albert told him it was ammonium nitrate? Had he mailed to French Supply Counsel or received from French Supply Counsel any correspondence referring to this commodity as ammonium nitrate?

Referring to page 7 of the same report, does Arthur Clark recall that this description was used prior to the explosion?

We would also appreciate your locating and interviewing the two fire chiefs at the Houston Fire Department fire station which answers fire calls in the Port of Houston to determine that they are available as witnesses in this case and that they will testify, first, that when answering a fire call on board a vessel they expect the master of the vessel to be able to tell them the kind of cargo that is afire, the dangerous propensities of the cargo, if any, and how the fire should be fought regarding the use of water, C.O.<sup>2</sup>, steam, etc. Secondly, their general knowledge of oxidizing materials

HO 131-39

and particularly ammonium nitrate fertilizer prior to the Texas City explosion should be covered. In this connection they should be asked how they would have fought the fire on the GRANDCAMP at that time and why they would have used that method.

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
INTERVIEW REPORT

Date: January 30, 1958

JESSE L. NEWLIN, Box 289, Arcadia, Texas, who is employed by the Continental Kmsco Company, My Kawa Road, Houston, Texas, was reinterviewed regarding the signed statement he furnished FBI agents in 1948. The signed statement is set out below, which was reviewed in detail with NEWLIN:

"Hitchcock, Texas  
Mar. 19, 1948

"I, JESSE L. NEWLIN make the following voluntary statement to J. A. MARTIN, Special Agent, Federal Bureau of Investigation. I realize this statement may be used in court.

"I am 28 years of age and have completed the 7th grade in school.

"Prior to the explosion in Texas City in April, 1947 I worked as a longshoreman there about ten years. The last two years I worked as gang foreman.

"In about the first part of 1946 I started handling a material which I called fertilizer and which was also labelled Ammonium nitrate. It was in 100 lb. brown paper bags which had several layers.

"No one ever told me this material was dangerous or that it might burn or explode. No special regulations were ever given to me as to how this material should be handled. No instructions were ever given to me as to what to do in case of fire. I was not afraid of the material. It was handled rather roughly being thrown around. I have seen it drop several feet and nothing happen. I never saw

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Interview with JESSE L. NEWLIN File # HO 131-39

on 1/16/58 at Houston, Texas Date Dictated: 1/27/58

by Special Agent LARRY L. THOMAS: mfh

HO 131-39

"anyone try to burn any of it. I have dropped lighted cigarettes in it and the cigarette would go out.

"During the time I handled the fertilizer I was gang foreman and had charge of from 24 to 28 men which was crew for loading a hatch. I estimate I helped nitrate onto about 18 or 12 ships. Usually there was a sweeper on the gang and his job was to pick up the spilled fertilizer and put it in new sacks. He wouldn't go into the hold. If any of the bags broke after starting into the hold it would not be re-bagged. All American ships had a guard on them. The foreign ships very seldom had one.

"There were 'no smoking' signs on the docks and in the warehouses of the Texas City docks. There were guards in the warehouses and on the docks. I never saw any smoking in the warehouses or on the docks. Most of the ships had such signs on them.

"The American ships were pretty strict about smoking and we would smoke on the deck only if the crew was smoking. I usually didn't go down into the hold so I didn't know whether they smoked when the guard was not around. On foreign ships the men did more smoking than in American ships, both on deck and in the hold. I have seen work snuff out a lighted cigarette on a bag of fertilizer. I have done this myself when working on the deck of a ship. I never saw a bag catch fire from this.

"I never worked on the High Flyer.

"On Friday April 11, 1947, the Grand Camp docked at pier 0 and I had charge of the #2 hatch loading fertilizer. I worked the day shift. The first day was from 10 AM to 6 PM. On the other days I worked from 7 AM to 6 PM. There was a night crew on. There was no guard on this

"ship and I saw no 'no smoking' signs on the board. On the first afternoon we worked on this ship one of the French seamen came down into #2 hold where the nitrate fertilizer was being stacked. I was in the hold at that time because I had a green crew and because I was tired of standing at the hold and acting as signalman. The crew had no signalman. The French man started smoking and I told him in French to get out and he said that was his home and kept on smoking. My own men in the hold asked me about the smoking and I told them if the Frenchman could do it they could also. I don't remember seeing my crew members smoke there while I was in the hold but they could have smoked I didn't notice it. The Chief Mate and Captain and Deck Engineer on the Grand Camp could speak English.

"I continued to load #2 hatch each day. On the morning of April 16, 1947 I came to work at 7 A.M. About 8:20 A.M. JIMMIE PAGE the Walking Foreman told me #4 hatch was on fire. He told me to pull my men out of the hold, cover up, and go to town and stand by for further aiders at the I.L.A. hall. I did this. It took about 10 minutes, with the whole gang working. I could see smoke coming up from the aft end of the ship. It looked like it was coming from the vents and around the tarpaulins. By the time me and my crew went down the gangway the smoke was coming thick. The smoke was black. As I walked along the dock I saw the gang from #4 hatch stacking some boxes from #5 hatch and one the boy, JES MENDOZA, told me it was ammunition. I saw three of these boxes. They were about 22 inches by 18 inches by 18 inches in measurement. One had the word 'Ammo' on it.

"I had told my men to go to town and stand by at the I.L.A. hall.

"I went from the pier to the time keepers office just off dock B., got my time book and

"told him what time the walking foreman had knocked us off. We had been knocked off at 8:30 AM. I returned to pier 0 to check to see that my men had left. I didn't see any of them so I went to JOHNNIE LONGER's car parked near the Sea train docks and went to town. By the time we left fire and smoke were coming out of hatch #4. It was a grayish yellow color. I saw pieces of burning paper coming out of the hatch. Warehouse 0 was not on fire when I left the scene. The firemen from Texas City and from the Republic Oil Company had their hoses hooked up but I don't remember whether the water was running. The French crew members were running up and down the deck. I did not see them putting water or anything else on the fire.

"After we left the docks we drove toward the labor hole and were about a quarter to a half mile from the docks when the explosion came. We had already gotten to the labor hole and was walking when the explosion came.

"I heard a blast and was immediately knocked down. I only heard one explosion. I did not have any physical injuries except for being shaken up and somewhat dazed. I left Texas City after the explosion with EUGENE BUSH and went home at Arcadia, Texas. I was there that night when the second explosion came and was not hurt.

"The dunnage in the #2 hold was not good. It was used lumber and pretty broken up. JOHNNIE HOFF told me to put the paper down and go to work; that the big shot said it was O.K. HOFF was walking foreman. I don't know who he was talking about but suppose it was the inspector for the Insurance Underwriters. I never him around the Guard Camp.

"I did not notice anything different about the fertilizer going into the Grand Camp from that I

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"had handled in the past. There was not an unusual number of broken bags on this shipment.

"I have read the above statement and every word is true.

"/s/ J. L. NEWLIN

"WITNESSED:

"/s/ J. A. MARTIN, FBI  
"/s/ R. B. MILLER, FBI."

In response to specific questions NEWLIN gave the following answers:

2a. NEWLIN stated that he observed a French crewman using a lighted cigarette in hold #2. He stated that French crewmen smoked on the deck and around the hatches at all times.

2b. NEWLIN stated that he never saw his own men smoking in hold #2 at any time.

2c. NEWLIN said that there was no French guard or watchman on the GrandCamp to prevent smoking at any time.

2d. NEWLIN said that no special instructions were ever issued regarding smoking on the GrandCamp. He also stated that he did not recall any no smoking signs on the GrandCamp.

2e. NEWLIN stated that he never saw the French crew drunk or in the act of drinking. He thought that they were an average crew. He said he saw the French master smoking but had never seen him drunk. He thought the master maintained reasonable discipline among the crew. He could not recall the presence of a wine closet on hold #4.

2f. NEWLIN said that in hole #2 in the tween deck area, shelled peanuts in sacks, twine, and a large truck had previously been loaded. He could recall no combustible materials loaded in hold #2.

2g. NEWLIN stated that material was generally referred to as nitrate.

2h. NEWLIN stated that after the fire had been discovered he saw four or five boxes of ammunition stacked on the aft end of the ship. He said the boxes were wooden and are approximately the size of 50 caliber ammunition. He said the boxes were plainly marked "Ammo" on the sides of them. He stated that they were bringing the ammo out of hold #5 as he was leaving the ship. He said he had to pass by hold #5 where the ammunition was being stacked in order to leave the ship. NEWLIN said that from the way the men were handling the boxes marked "Ammo" he could tell they were not empty but he did not know whether they actually contained ammunition as he did not open any of the boxes.

2i. NEWLIN stated that he never saw acid in hold #3. NEWLIN stated that he was foreman of the crew loading nitrate into hold #2. He said that most of his activities took place on the deck or on the deck of the ship but not down in hold #2 although he occasionally entered the hold to check on the loading operation. He stated that the procedure was that you did not look into or enter holds in which you work was not taking place. For those reasons he is not familiar with operations in any of the other holds.

3. NEWLIN stated that he would testify under oath in Court as to information contained in his signed statement and subsequently information obtained during this interview.

5. NEWLIN stated that he had been contacted by an insurance company, the name of which he does not know, before the FBI previously interviewed him and obtained the signed statement.

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
INTERVIEW REPORT

Date: January 31, 1958

WILLIAM RICHARD LONG, Box 147, Arcadia, Texas, who is employed as a dairy man was reinterviewed at his home regarding the signed statement he gave to FBI Agents in 1948. The signed statement, which is set out below, was reviewed in detail with LONG:

"Texas City, Texas  
March 16, 1948

"I, WILLIAM RICHARD LONG, Arcadia, Texas, make the following voluntary statements to MURRY C. FALKNER, who has identified himself to me as a Special Agent, Federal Bureau of Investigation, United States Department of Justice, knowing that they may be used in a court of law.

"I have worked as a longshoreman at the Texas City Terminal Railway Docks, off and on, since the early part of 1946, and was so employed in April of 1947.

"I went to work on the SS Grand Camp in my capacity as a longshoreman on the date of the arrival of that vessel at the said docks in April of 1947. My particular job was stacking sacks of nitrate in hold Number Two on the said vessel. My hours of duty were during the daytime, ordinarily from about 7:00 A.M. to about 5:00 P.M.

"On April 15, 1947 I went to work at about 8:00 A.M., stacking sacks of nitrate in hold Number Two on the said SS Grand Camp under Foreman JESSE NEWLAND.

"I wish to say at this point that on leaving this vessel at about 5:00 P.M. on the afternoon of April 15, 1947 there was nothing unusual in connection with this vessel.

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Interview with WILLIAM RICHARD LONG File # HO 131-39  
on 1/20/58 at Arcadia, Texas Date Dictated: 1/27/58  
by Special Agent LARRY L. THOMAS:mfh

"After reporting for work on the morning of April 16, 1947, I continued as the previous day with stacking sacks of nitrate in Hold Number Two. At about 8:00 A.M. or perhaps a little later on this date, my foreman, JESSE NEWLAND, called to us in Hold Number Two and told us to come out of the hold as the first two men on entering Hold Number Four to begin the day's work in stacking nitrate there had found that there was a fire in Hold Number Four. Foreman NEWLAND further told us to cover hatch No. Two, which we did. I then descended to the dock, from which point I could observe a sort of whitish odor smoke coming from Hatch No. Two of the said vessel.

"I then walked to the end of Warehouse 0 and onto the road which passes at the rear there. From this point I observed the SS Grand Camp and noticed that there was now considerably more smoke, which had become a sort of golden yellow color. Within a few minutes I entered a car with a friend and started to town. En route to the Union Hall we were interrupted in the trip by having to stand aside for the fire trucks to proceed on to the SS Grand Camp. As soon as possible we continued in the car and had reached a point near Texas Street in Texas City when there was an explosion. I later learned that this explosion was that of the SS Grand Camp. I did not return to the docks and on the early morning of April 17, 1947, I was at my home in Arcadia, Texas, when I heard the explosion of another ship, which I later learned was the SS High Flyer.

"During my service as a longshoreman at the local docks I have had occasion to handle nitrate on many occasions. The nitrate that we loaded in the SS Grand Camp appeared to me to be identical with the nitrate that I had previously handled on other ships. Moreover, we handled this nitrate in loading it on the SS Grand Camp in exactly the same manner as we had handled previous cargo of nitrate on other vessels.

"I never received any sort of special instructions relative to the handling of nitrate. I handled nitrate exactly the same as I handled any other cargo in containers of similar size and weight. No one ever mentioned to me that nitrate was considered explosive or dangerous in any manner, except I found that if nitrate entered a cut place on the skin, there would be a burning sensation.

"Nor had I ever received any instructions relative to steps to be taken by me in the event of a fire occurring on a vessel on which I was working.

"There were numerous signs about the local warehouses and docks warning against smoking in this vicinity. There were permanent signs and were not placed there with reference to the handling of this nitrate for this particular vessel. I did not smoke on the docks, in the warehouses or in the holds of the vessels and did not observe anyone else so doing. We were permitted to smoke in the passageways aboard the vessels and we did smoke in the passageway aboard the said SS Grand Camp. This passageway on the SS Grand Camp where we smoked was at a distance of approximately four feet from Hatch No. Four. After we had finished our cigarettes in the passageway it was the usual procedure to stomp out the lighted butts with our shoes.

"This nitrate comes in heavy paper sacks of a sort of light tan color and of a weight of approximately one-hundred pounds each. They bear the stencil markings, to the best of my recollection, 'Nitrate Ammonium.' When a sack of the nitrate became broken and the contents thereof spilled in the hold, we were instructed to place this nitrate in a new sack, which were provided for that purpose. I would estimate that in handling a sack of nitrate would be broken about once each thirty minutes. It is my recollection that in addition to the nitrate in Hold No. Four, there were sacks of peanuts, a truck and some sealed boxes, the contents of the latter being unknown to me.

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"I have carefully read the above statement which is true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

\* /s/ WILLIAM RICHARD LONG  
William Richard Long

"WITNESS:

"/s/ MURRY C. FALKNER  
Special Agent, FBI."

2a. LONG could not recall whether the French crewmen smoked in the hold, on the deck, or around the hatches.

2b. LONG stated that he never saw a longshoreman smoking in the holds.

2c. LONG said that he never saw any guards or watchman to prevent smoking on the SS Grand Camp. He stated that other French ships had guards in the holds to prevent smoking.

2d. LONG said there were no special instructions issued regarding smoking on the SS GrandCamp.

2e. LONG could not recall the French crew or the French master in enough detail to speak as to their demeanor or evidence of drinking while on the SS GrandCamp. He stated that he was not familiar with a wine closet in hold #4.

2f. LONG said that there was no combustible materials stored in the same hold or tween decks with the ammonium nitrate. He said he did recall peanuts, twine, and some type of truck being stored in the tween deck area.

2g. LONG stated that the material was called both fertilizer and ammonium nitrate.

2h. LONG stated that he did not at any time see ammunition on board the SS GrandCamp.

2i. LONG stated that he did not know the presence of any acid in hold #3.

3. LONG stated that he would be willing to testify under oath as to the statements made in the signed statement

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and the answers given at the present interview.

5. LONG stated that the only people he could recall who had interviewed him regarding the explosion other than the FBI, were men of insurance companies.

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
INTERVIEW REPORT

Date: January 31, 1958

HENRY WILLIE DAVID, Box 130, Route 1, Alta Loma, Texas, was interviewed at his home. He is presently employed as a longshoreman in Galveston, Texas. The signed statement which he gave to FBI Agents in 1948, as set out below, was reviewed in detail with DAVID:

"Texas City, Texas  
March 12, 1948

"I, HENRY DAVID, make the following voluntary statement to MR. COOK, Special Agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, knowing that this statement can be used in Court.

"I am 33 years of age, married and have five children. I reside at Alta Loma, Texas and receive mail at General Delivery there. I have been working as a longshoreman at Texas City, Texas since 1936. On April 16, 1947 I went to work at 8:00 A.M., loading flour in #5 hatch on the Wilson B. Keene at pier B. About 8:30 that morning we got orders to cover the hatch because of a fire on the GrandCamp. We covered up and about five minutes to 9:00, I left the ship and went over to the GrandCamp with D. A. WILSON, and we stood for a couple of minutes. We then came up town and when the GrandCamp exploded, we were in Evans' Food Store on Sixth Street. Neither one of us were hurt at all. I don't know anything at all about the fire on the GrandCamp. I was home in bed when the High Flyer exploded that night and I don't know anything about the fire or explosion on that vessel either.

"At 1:00 P.M. on Monday, April 14, 1947 I went to work as winchman on #4 hatch on the GrandCamp. I worked until 5:00 that night and at the same job from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. on Tuesday, April 15, 1947. We were loading fertilizer in that hatch. I

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Interview with HENRY WILLIE DAVID File # HO 131-39  
on 1/20/58 at Alta Loma, Texas Date Dictated: 1/27/58  
by Special Agent LARRY L. THOMAS:mfh

"did not work on the High Flyer at any time. I was given no instructions by anyone concerning the loading of the GrandCamp, and no instructions about smoking on the vessel. I never noticed any 'no smoking' signs on the GrandCamp. The crew of the vessel were smoking on the deck and several of them would stand around the coaming of #4 hatch and watch the loading, and they would be smoking at the time. I don't know whether any of the longshoremen in the hold were smoking because I couldn't see them, but the other winchman working with me who was JIMMIE CORSETT was smoking at the winch. He was smoking out in the open and no one said anything to him about it or tried to stop him at any time. I was not smoking because I don't smoke. I couldn't see the longshoremen working on the wharf, and don't know if they were smoking.

"There was no sack sewer on this ship, and I don't know if they had one of the wharf. Quite a few of the bags got broken going into the hold, but I would say that the breakage was no greater than on other fertilizer ships that I worked on. On the afternoon of 4/14/47 as I recall, one of the ship's officers made us bring a couple trays of fertilizer back out of the hold because the bags were pretty well broken, but outside of that any broken bags that went into the hold were stowed.

"As far as I could see, there was nothing unusual about the way this ship was loaded, and I would say that it was loaded just the same as any other other fertilizer ships I have ever worked on. The bags looked just the same as all other bags I have loaded, and the fertilizer that I saw spilled looked just the same as all the other fertilizer I have seen.

"No one has ever said to me that this fertilizer would burn or explode, and I never thought that it would. I have never seen or heard of any other burning or exploding, and we never got any instructions that it was dangerous or had to be handled in any special way.

"I have worked on fertilizer ships as winchman and also in the hold and on the wharf loading fertilizer on trays to be loaded on the ship. I have also worked as a warehouseman unloading fertilizer from box cars into warehouses and have on a few occasions loaded fertilizer directly from box cars onto trays to be taken into the hold of a ship.

"There were general standing instructions from all stevedores that longshoremen were not to smoke on the deck or in the holds of any ship, but there was common practice for the men to smoke on the deck and in the holds of all kinds of ships including cotton ships and nitrate ships. American ships always had a watchman on them and the men would usually sneak a smoke when the watchman was not around, but I have seen them smoke openly, and all the watchman would do would be to tell them to put the cigarette out. Nothing was ever done to any of the men for smoking. Foreign ships never had watchman and on those ships there was no one to stop the men unless maybe the stevedore happened to catch them. There was not watchman on the GrandCamp.

"The Texas City Terminal Company didn't allow smoking in their warehouses, and they were strict about it. They have watchman making the rounds all of the time to see that no one smoked, and there were 'No Smoking' signs in all of their warehouses. The men were allowed to smoke at the end of the wharf outside the warehouse and most generally the men would go out there and smoke, but some of them were too lazy and would sneak a smoke in the warehouse or in the box cars when the watchman weren't around.

"In working as a warehouseman loading fertilizer into the warehouse from the box cars, I worked for the Texas City Terminal Company. There were always some broken bags in every box car and the

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"most of these would be right at the door of the car, because most of the bags that were broken in getting the car door open. I would say that there would be about an average of ten to fifteen broken bags to each car.

"There was always a sweeper to clear back broken sacks but once in a while somebody would sneak a broken bag by him because they didn't want to go to the trouble of setting it aside. Such bags would be stacked in the warehouse and I have stacked some of them.

"Some of the bags taken out of box cars would be warm and so did some of the bags taken from the warehouse to be loaded on ships. The bags were stacked about ten high in the box cars and about the same height in the warehouse. The warm bags were always those that were near the center of the stacks. I never found any too hot to be handled with bare hands, but some of them got pretty hot.

"Some of the bags would be a darker brown than usual and would break when they were picked up. These bags seemed to be brittle and looked like they had been burned. It looked to me like either the heat in the bags did this or that there was something in the fertilizer that was heating the bags up.

"All of the bags had 'Ammonium Nitrate Fertilizer' on them, and also had something about 32% of them. There was nothing on the bags that said the stuff would explode or burn.

"I have read this statement of three typewritten pages, and I have signed my name to each page.

"*/s/ HENRY DAVID*

"**WITNESS:**

"*/s/ LEO K. COOK, FBI*"

DAVID gave the following responses to questions asked at the present interview:

2a. DAVID stated the French crewman smoked on deck and around the hatches. He recalled seeing Mexicans smoking as they passed by the holds.

2b. DAVID stated that he has seen longshoremen smoking in the holds.

2c. DAVID said there was no guard or watchman in the ship to prevent smoking.

2d. DAVID could not recall any special instructions regarding smoking on the SS GrandCamp.

2e. DAVID stated that the French crewmen gave him a bottle of wine for his own use. He did not know where they kept the wine and was not aware of a wine closet in hold #4. He said the crew was average and had never seen them drunk. He stated the captain appeared to be a normal captain and was not aware of any drinking by the captain, in which he might have indulged.

2f. DAVID stated that #4 hold was entered when ammonium nitrate was first loaded into it. He said there may have been sulphur in hold #2.

2g. DAVID said the material was generally called fertilizer.

2h. DAVID said that he never saw any ammunition on the GrandCamp.

2i. DAVID was not aware of the presence of any acid in hold #3.

3. Mr. DAVID said that he would be willing to testify under oath as to the statements just made and the facts contained in his signed statement previously given.

5. DAVID recalled having talked to both lawyers and insurance men regarding the explosion in addition to the FBI Agents.

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
INTERVIEW REPORT

DATE: January 31, 1958

NEAL CURTIS CLOUD, 325 Second Avenue North, Texas City, Texas, who is employed by A. Pruitt Construction Company and presently working at the Monsanto Chemical Company, Texas City, Texas, was reinterviewed regarding the signed statement previously furnished to FBI Agents in 1948. The signed statement, as set out below, was reviewed in detail;

"Texas City, Texas  
March 15, 1948

"I, NEAL C. CLOUD, Alta Loma, Texas, make the following voluntary statements to MURRY C. FALKNER, who has identified himself to me as a Special Agent of the FBI, US Department of Justice, knowing that these statements may be used in a court of law.

"I worked as a longshoreman at the Texas City Terminal Railway Docks in Texas City for about one year prior to April 16, 1947. In the early part of April, 1947, I worked as a longshoreman at the said docks loading nitrate on the SS High Flyer. This job continued for about two or three days. This vessel then moved to another dock and the SS GrandCamp came in and docked at warehouse O. I then began working on the SS GrandCamp loading nitrate into hold #4 on the night shift, from 7:00 P.M. to 6:00 A.M. I was so engaged on the said vessel during the nights of April 14 and 15th, and 15th and 16th. As stated, my particular work was storing the sacks of nitrate in what I believed to be hold #4, though I am not certain. In any event, the hold wherein I worked was in the forepart of the said SS GrandCamp. This nitrate which I loaded on the SS High Flyer was identical with the nitrate that I stored in the hold of the SS GrandCamp and was identical with the nitrate which I had

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Interview with NEAL CURTIS CLOUD File # HO 131-39

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on 1/21/58 at Texas City, Texas Date Dictated: 1/27/58

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by Special Agent LARRY L. THOMAS:mfh

"previously handled on numerous occasions at the said docks. Further, we handled the loading of this nitrate on the SS GrandCamp and the SS High Flyer in exactly the same manner that we had loaded nitrate on other vessels previously."

"On April 15, 1947 I went on duty in hold #4 of the SS GrandCamp loading nitrate as stated. I went off work at 6:00 A.M. on the date of April 16, 1947. At the time I went off work I observed nothing of any unusual nature. I saw nothing to indicate a fire on the said vessel and no one made any remarks to me that indicated that anything had occurred aboard the said SS GrandCamp. Everything seemed to be in order when I left the said vessel at 6:00 A.M. on April 16, 1947.

"After going off work I proceeded to my home at Alta Loma where I was when the SS GrandCamp exploded. I was also at my home the following morning, April 17, 1947 when the SS High Flyer exploded.

"I recall that on the SS GrandCamp there was some bulk peanuts in the upper part of hold #4. There was nothing in the part of hold #4 where I worked but the nitrate which we had loaded therein.

"There are numerous signs warning against smoking in the warehouses at the said docks. Further, it is understood that we were not to smoke in the warehouses, on the docks, or on the vessels being worked by us. However, this rule was not strictly observed. I have seen other longshoremen smoking in the warehouses and in the holds of the vessels. I have smoked in the warehouses and in the holds of the vessels being worked by us. With reference to the night of April 15, and 16th in the hold of the SS GrandCamp, I can say that other longshoremen and myself did smoke while loading nitrate into this hold. The other longshoreman would put out their cigarettes by stomping with their heals.

"I myself made certain the cigarette was extinguished by placing saliva upon the lighted end of the cigarette before throwing it down. I would say that it is the general practice for longshoremen to smoke while loading cargo at the local docks, both in the warehouses and on the ships.

"During my period of service as a longshoreman, I have handled nitrate on many occasions. I am familiar with this fertilizer, and I am aware of the manner in which it is received and placed on the ships. This fertilizer comes in heavy paper sacks, weighing about 100 lbs. each, and is received here in box cars from which it is unloaded into warehouses. From the warehouses it is loaded onto the various vessels. When a sack of fertilizer breaks, it is the custom for a 'sweeper' to sweep up the spilled fertilizer, place it in a new sack and sew it. I never at any time received any special instructions relative to the handling of nitrate. We handled nitrate exactly in the same manner that we had handled any other cargo consisting of containers of similar size and weight. No one ever told me or intimated to me that nitrate contained any explosive or otherwise dangerous qualities.

"I have carefully read the above statements, on this and the preceding page, and they are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

"Signed:  
"/s/ MEAL C. CLOUD

"WITNESS:  
"/s/ MURRY C. FALKNER  
Special Agent, FBI."

Mr. CLOUD gave the following answers to questions asked during the interview:

2a. CLOUD stated that he thought all of the crewmen smoked on board the ship.

2b. CLOUD said the longshoremen definitely smoked in the holds of the ship.

2c. CLOUD said there was no guard or watchman on the ship but he recalled the presence of no smoking signs.

2d. CLOUD said there were no special instructions issued regarding smoking on the GrandCamp.

2e. CLOUD said the French crew always had wine but he never observed any drunkenness on the part of the French crew or the French master. He was not aware of a wine closet in hold #4.

2f. CLOUD could not recall the presence of any explosives or combustible materials in the hold in the tween deck area.

2g. CLOUD said the material was called both fertilizer and ammonium nitrate.

2h & i. CLOUD stated that he never saw any ammunition or acid on the GrandCamp.

3. CLOUD said that he would be willing to testify under oath as to statements contained in his signed statement and answers given during this interview.

5. CLOUD stated that he has never been contacted by anyone else in connection with the explosion.

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
INTERVIEW REPORT

Date: January 31, 1958

JOYCE THOMAS FRENCH, Box 301, Arcadia, Texas, who is employed at the American Oil Company, Texas City, Texas, as a winch truck driver was interviewed regarding the signed statement he furnished to Agents of the FBI in 1948. This signed statement, which is set out below, was gone over in great detail with FRENCH.

"Arcadia, Texas  
March 18, 1948

"I, JOYCE THOMAS FRENCH, make the following voluntary statement to J. A. MARTIN, Special Agent, FBI. I realize this statement may be used in court.

"I am 18 years of age, single, and have graduated from high school. Prior to the explosion on April 16, 1947 I had worked as a longshoreman at Texas City, Texas approximately nine months. During this period I had handled Ammonium Nitrate Fertilizer on several occasions. I was not a member of the Union. I estimate that I helped load about fifteen ships with fertilizer and in about half of these ships, I worked in the hold stacking the sacks of fertilizer which were lowered on the trays, and in the other half, I worked in the warehouse loading the trays from the piles of fertilizer which were stacked there. Usually there was a sweeper in the warehouse whose job it was to rebag the fertilizer which had spilled from any broken bags. In the hold of the ships, however, there was usually no sweeper and the bags which became broken going into the hold were left as they were. I recall that some of the bags of the fertilizer when they were removed from the stacks in the warehouse were warm to the touch, but not too hot to handle. I also noticed a few of the bags were still warm when they would be lowered into the hold.

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Interview with JOYCE THOMAS FRENCH File # HO 131-39  
on 1/21/58 at Texas City, Texas Date Dictated: 1/27/58  
by Special Agent LARRY L. THOMAS:mfh

"I did not consider the Ammonium Nitrate Fertilizer dangerous. No one ever told me that it would explode, and I never saw any of it burn. No regulations were ever given to me by any superior officers to the effect that the fertilizer was dangerous or that it might burn or explode. No special instructions were ever given to me as to what should be done in case of a fire in this sort of material. I never saw any instructions restricting the taking of matches onto ships or of smoking on ships. On most of the ships I worked, there were 'No Smoking' signs on the ships. It was the general policy to smoke in the holds of ships unless the gang foreman told us specifically not too. In the holds of the nitrate ships, we would smoke, and sometimes even sneak a smoke regardless of the gang foreman's instructions because we didn't believe that the stuff would burn.

"I worked in the #2 hold of the GrandCamp from the time that it arrived in Texas City, which I believe was on April 11, 1947. My hours usually were from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. On the morning of April 16, we reported for work in the #2 hold of this ship at 7:00 A.M. I recall that I smoked in the hold of the GrandCamp and saw others smoking there. Usually we would snuff out our cigarettes on one of the bags containing the fertilizer. I never smoked in the warehouses and saw no one else smoke there. In the loading of the GrandCamp, I worked 1/2 day in the warehouse on the first day, and the remainder of the time I worked in the #2 hold of this ship.

"We didn't smoke in the hold #2 of the Grand Camp on the morning of April 16, 1947 as we were not down there long enough.

"The Ammonium Nitrate fertilizer came in brown paper bags which had several layers. There was a label on the bags which said 'fertilizer' and 'Ammonium Nitrate.'

"I never worked on the High Flyer to my recollection.

"At about 8:30 A.M. on April 16, 1947 I was told by my gang foreman, JESSE NEWLIN, to come out of the hold and cover up as there was a fire in #4 hold. We immediately did this, and in about 15 minutes we had the #2 hold covered. I didn't see any smoke coming out of the #4 hold until I started down the gang plank. This was the first point where I could get a view of the #4 hold. The smoke was yellow in color. We went directly to the west end of the docks and stood around near the road until about 9:00 A.M. or five after 9:00. I then got in the car with EUGENE BUSK and JACKIE LONG and started to the Union Hall. When we were about two blocks from the Union Hall, we heard two blasts about five or ten seconds apart. The second blast seemed to be the strongest and pushed the car a little, but did not injure any of us.

"JACKIE LONG took some pictures of the Grand-Camp burning just before we left the scene. The Warehouse 0 was not burning when we left the docks. I remember seeing the firemen on the docks shooting water up onto the GrandCamp. The French crew members were running around apparently trying to get some water on the fire. I never did see any indications of the crew members being drunk or drinking.

"I spent the night of April 16, 1947 in Arcadia, Texas.

"Immediately after the explosion on the morning of April 16, 1947 I saw a lot of smoke and debris coming from the area of the dock.

"I have read the above statement and sign it knowing it to be true.

"*s/ JOYCE FRENCH*

"WITNESS

"*s/ R. B. MILLER, FBI, Houston.*

"*s/ JULIAN A. MARTIN, FBI.*"

FRENCH gave the following answers to questions asked during the interview:

2a. FRENCH said that he did not recall smoking on the part of the French crew.

2b. FRENCH stated that the longshoremen smoked in the holds.

2c. FRENCH said there was no guard or watchman to prevent smoking on board the ship.

2d. FRENCH could recall of no special instructions issued regarding smoking on the GrandCamp.

2e. FRENCH said that he had never seen the French crew drunk and that he only observed the French master at one time and that was on the morning of April 16 after the fire had started. He stated that he thought discipline on the GrandCamp was below that on American ships. He said he was not aware of a wine closet in hold #4.

2f. FRENCH could recall no combustible materials or explosives on board the GrandCamp but he said there were peanuts in a truck in the tween deck area on hold #2.

2g. FRENCH said that material was commonly called both fertilizer and ammonium nitrate.

2h & i. FRENCH could not recall ever having seen any ammunition or acid aboard the GRANDCAMP.

3. FRENCH said that he would be willing to testify under oath as to the statements made during this interview and those in the signed statement given previously as subpoenaed.

5. FRENCH recalled that either an insurance company or a steamship company had contacted him in Galveston regarding the explosion.

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
INTERVIEW REPORT

Date: January 31, 1958

E. J. STINSON, 3823 North One Half Street, Galveston, Texas, who is employed by the Plummer Pest Control, 4323 South Street, was reinterviewed regarding the signed statement he furnished FBI Agents in 1948. The statement, which is set out below, was reviewed in detail:

"Arcadia, Texas  
March 17, 1948

"I, E. J. STINSON, make the following voluntary statement to JULIAN A. MARTIN, Special Agent, Federal Bureau of Investigation. I realize that this statement may be used in court.

"I am 23 years of age, single, and live at Arcadia, Texas. My education consisted of completion of the 8th grade.

"I had worked as a longshoreman for six months prior to the explosion on April 16, 1947. I have helped in loading ammonium nitrate fertilizer onto ships. I do not recall the number of ships that I helped load. I worked part of this time in the warehouse loading the fertilizer onto the trays and part of the time I worked in the holds of the ships stacking the bags of fertilizer which had been lowered into the holds by the trays. I did not consider ammonium nitrate fertilizer dangerous as no one has ever told me that it might explode. I have heard from some other workers, whose names I do not remember, that it might burn. No officials ever told me that this fertilizer would either burn or explode. I had never received any written instructions as to the care which should be used around this fertilizer as to smoking or what to do in case of fire.

-38-

Interview with E. J. STINSON File # HO 131-39

on 1/24/58 at Galveston, Texas Date Dictated: 1/27/58

by Special Agent LARRY L. THOMAS

"The ammonium nitrate fertilizer came in brown paper bags and each bag of it weighed about 100 pounds. In the warehouses we would take the bags from piles and load them onto trays. Any broken bags would usually be held out and a sweeper would re-bag the material from these. If bags became broken while being lowered into the holds of the ships the material was not usually re-bagged but would stay loose in the hold.

"The warehouse had 'No Smoking' signs in it and I never smoked there and never saw anyone else smoking there. Most of the ships into which I helped load nitrate fertilizer had 'No Smoking' signs on them. I do not recall that the GrandCamp had such signs. In many instances the gang pusher of the hold into which fertilizer was being loaded would tell the workers not to smoke or to be careful if they did smoke. It was the general practice to 'sneak' a smoke in the hold of a nitrate ship whether or not the gang boss told us not to smoke. I have smoked in the holds of such ships and I have seen others smoke there. Usually the cigarette stub was mashed out against one of the bags of fertilizer. Between smokes on the same cigarette I have seen the cigarette stubs laid on the sacks of fertilizer on the cargo boarding or on the angle irons above the spot where we were working, for a short time between 'drags.' I smoked in the No. 2 hold of the GrandCamp while it was in port prior to its explosion and I saw others smoking there. I don't believe that any of us smoked in that hold, however, on the morning of April 16, 1947, as we were not down there long enough to want a smoke before we were ordered out.

"I worked in the No. 2 hold of the GrandCamp from April 11, 1947, to April 16, 1947. Usually the hours of the day shift on which I worked were from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm; however, on April 16, 1947,

"We started work at 7:00 am in No. 2 hold. After we had worked about an hour or longer, the gang boss, JESSE NEWLIN, told us to come out of the hold and cover up as there was a fire in No. 4 hold. We came out and placed a cover on No. 2 hold and NEWLIN then told us to knock off until the fire was out. As I went down the gang plank onto the dock I saw an orange colored smoke coming out of the No. 4 hold of the GrandCamp. We walked to the west end of the docks and stood there some ten or fifteen minutes watching the smoke and fire coming out of the hold of the GrandCamp. Then I went with JOHN LANGNER, JESSE NEWLIN, WADE WILSON, and BUCK MATHERNEY in an automobile to the International Longshoremen's Association Hall in Texas City. We had gotten there and gotten in the Hall when the explosion occurred. The door flew off and hit me in the back of the head and knocked me down. It did not injure me to any extent and I have made no claims in connection with the explosion.

"I had no previous knowledge of any fire on the GrandCamp before my gang foreman told me to come out of the hold and cover up. I do not know anything as to the details of the fighting of the fire in hold No. 4. Up until the time we left the scene of the fire I did not notice that Warehouse 6 was on fire.

"I spent the night of April 16, 1947, at Arcadia, Texas, and was not injured by the second explosion.

"I never saw any of the bags catch on fire when I put out a cigarette on them; neither have I ever seen anybody try to burn any of the fertilizer. In working in the Warehouse I never saw anyone smoking there.

"After we got down off the gang plank on the morning of April 16, 1947, someone told me that there was supposed to be some ammunition on the

HO 131-39

"GrandCamp which might explode. This was one reason why we left that area when we did. I never saw any such ammunition and I don't remember who told me it was there.

"While we were standing at the docks watching the fire we saw the firemen on the docks shooting water on the ship. I don't remember anything about the French crew members of the ship. I don't recall ever seeing any of them drunk or apparently drinking.

"Usually there was a sweeper in the warehouse who re-bagged the material spilled from broken bags. I don't recall whether there was one on hand when we were loading the fertilizer onto the GrandCamp. I don't recall anything about the fertilizer which we were loading onto the GrandCamp being different from that we had loaded before.

"I have read the above statement and know it to be true.

"*/s/* Signed "E." "J." STINSON

"WITNESSED:

"*/s/* R. B. MILLER, FBI, Houston  
"*/s/* JULIAN A. MARTIN, FBI."

STINSON gave the following answers to specific questions asked during the interview:

2a. STINSON could not recall any smoking on the part of the French crew.

2b. STINSON stated the longshoremen smoking in the holds.

HO 1313-39

2e. STINSON said that he could not recall a guard or watchman stationed on the ship to prevent smoking.

2d. STINSON said there were no special instructions issued to smoking on the GrandCamp but that the standard procedure was that there was no smoking to be done when loading any of the ships.

2e. STINSON could not recall the crewmen being drunk and thought them to be an average crew. He stated that he had never observed the captain. He could not recall the presence of a wine closet in hole #4.

2f. STINSON said that he could not recall any combustible materials in the hold or tween decks.

2g. He stated that the material was generally called fertilizer.

2h & i. STINSON stated that he never saw any ammunition or acid on board the GrandCamp.

3. STINSON said that he would be willing to testify under oath as to the contents of the signed statement previously given and the questions answered during this interview.

5. STINSON said that shortly after the explosion he made a tape recording statement to some organization the name of which he has forgotten.

2-6-58

AIRTEL

TO: SAC, HOUSTON (131-39)  
FROM: DIRECTOR, FBI (131-363)

SS WILSON B. KEENE,  
SS HIGHFLYER,  
SS GRANDCAMP  
Admiralty Numbers 1868, 1869, 1870  
ADMIRALTY MATTER.

Rereps submitted by Houston, Dallas,  
Mobile and San Diego 1/31/58.

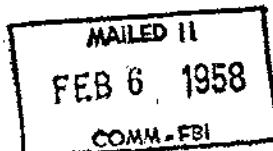
Suairtel, advising specifically what  
investigation, if any, is outstanding in this  
matter.

Keep the Bureau advised of any requests  
for additional investigation received from the  
Office of the USA, Houston.

JKP:eem  
(4) 1 A

REC-18 131-363-93

EX-146 25 FEB 7 1958



Tolson \_\_\_\_\_  
Nichols \_\_\_\_\_  
Boardman \_\_\_\_\_  
Belmont \_\_\_\_\_  
Mohr \_\_\_\_\_  
Parsons \_\_\_\_\_  
Rosen \_\_\_\_\_  
Tamm \_\_\_\_\_  
Trotter \_\_\_\_\_  
Nease \_\_\_\_\_  
Tele. Room \_\_\_\_\_  
Boltonman \_\_\_\_\_  
Gandy \_\_\_\_\_

65-11084-40

MAIL ROOM

F B I

Date:

2/8/58

Transmit the following in \_\_\_\_\_

(Type in plain text or code)

Via AIRTELAIRMAIL

(Priority or Method of Mailing)

*Re*  
 TO: DIRECTOR, FBI (131-363)  
 FROM: SAC, HOUSTON (131-39)  
 SUBJECT: SS WILSON B. KEENE,  
 SS HIGHFLYER,  
 SS GRANDCAMP  
 Admiralty Numbers 1868, 1869, 1870  
 ADMIRALTY MATTER

Re: Bureau airtel to Houston dated 2/6/58.

For the information of San Antonio, referenced airtel requested to advise the Bureau specifically what investigation is outstanding in this matter.

At the present time, the following investigation has been requested and outstanding:

1. Reinterview of ARTHUR CLARK, at Brownsville, Texas, as set forth in Houston airtel to Director, 1/27/58. This investigation requested by AUSA JAMES E. ROSS, Houston.

2. Investigation at Custom Houses in Galveston and Houston, Texas, as set forth in leads number three and number four in report of SA JOSEPH J. DOOLING 1/31/58. This investigation requested by Mr. ROSS, 1/20/58.

3. Investigation at Saybolt Laboratories for expert witnesses as stated in lead number five report of SA DOOLING, 1/31/58, and as stated on pages 30 and 31 of that report.

REC-65

131-363

6 FEB 10 1958

③ Bureau (AM)  
 1-San Antonio (Info) (131-5) (AM)  
 1-Houston

JJD:md  
 (5)

Approved: 26 FEB 1 1958  
 Special Agent in Charge

Sent \_\_\_\_\_ M Per \_\_\_\_\_

F B I

Date:

Transmit the following in \_\_\_\_\_

(Type in plain text or code)

Via \_\_\_\_\_

(Priority or Method of Mailing)

HO 131-39

4. Investigation at Houston Fire Department, see lead number six, report of SA DOOLING, 1/31/58, and pages 32 and 33 of that report.

5. Reinterviews of PETE SUBERMAN, Galveston, Texas, and Captain ROBERT WYNNE, Houston, Texas, and interviews of SA MURRY C. FALKNER, Mobile, and Captain PHARO, Houston, Texas. On 1/16/58, JAMES E. ROSS requested these interviews be held in abeyance and conducted at some later date he would say when. This is the same as lead number two of report of SA DOOLING, 1/31/58.

6. Investigation concerning article appearing in Houston Press on May 2, 1947, as requested by Department in memo. dated 1/16/58. On 1/24/58, as reported on page 30 in report of SA DOOLING, 1/31/58, Mr. ROSS requested investigation be held up pending his talk with Mr. GREEN of the Department.

On 2/1/58, Mr. ROSS advised all investigation should be temporarily held off until he could get through reading the reports except the reinterview of ARTHUR CLARK.

On 2/8/58, Mr. ROSS stated trial was postponed until 3/24/58, and that Mr. DALE GREEN, Departmental Attorney would be in Houston on 2/12/58, for a conference. The purpose of this conference is to determine the Government's proof of the case and to outline the Government's position. Inasmuch as this conference will determine what experts are needed, Mr. ROSS at this time only desires the reinterview of ARTHUR CLARK and the investigation at the Custom Houses in Galveston and Houston. Mr. ROSS stated he has to first digest the reports he has received prior to requesting any additional investigation. He is positive, however, that between now and 3/24/58, he will have various requests to locate expert witnesses.

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_ Sent: \_\_\_\_\_ M Per: \_\_\_\_\_  
Special Agent in Charge

F B I

Date:

Transmit the following in \_\_\_\_\_

(Type in plain text or code)

Via \_\_\_\_\_  
(Priority or Method of Mailing)

HO 131-39

San Antonio report reinterview of ARTHUR CLARK  
at Brownsville, Texas.

Houston will conduct investigations at Custom  
Houses, Galveston and Houston, as requested.

Houston will confer with Messr. ROSS and GREEN  
on 2/12/58, at Houston, Texas, and advise Bureau of  
additional requests for investigation.

-3-

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_ Sent: \_\_\_\_\_ M Per: \_\_\_\_\_  
Special Agent in Charge

F B I

Date: 2/11/58

Transmit the following message via AIRTELAIR MAIL

(Priority or Method of Mailing)

TO: DIRECTOR, FBI (131-363)

FROM: SAC, HOUSTON (131-39)

SUBJECT: SS WILSON B. KEENE;  
SS HIGHFLYER;  
SS GRANDCAMP  
Admiralty Numbers 1868, 1869, 1870  
ADMIRALTY MATTER

Re: Houston airtel to Director, 2/8/58.

On 2/10/58 R. R. ROLLINS, U. S. Customs, Houston, Texas, advised all outbound manifests in Galveston, Texas, prior to 1952 destroyed. Also advised that all such records at Houston prior to 7/1/57 have been destroyed.

Houston will advise AUSA ROSS and Departmental Attorney DALE GREEN on 2/12/58 of the above.

3 - Bureau (AM)  
1 - Houston

JJD:bjm  
(4)

REC-18

131-363-95

EX-108

13 FEB 13 1958

68 FEB 19 1958

Approved: J Sent: \_\_\_\_\_ M Per: \_\_\_\_\_  
Special Agent in Charge

2-17-58

AIRTEL

*esa* *11-1*  
TO: SAC, HOUSTON (131-39) *5-1*  
REC-37 FROM: DIRECTOR, FBI (131-363) - *96*

cc: WILSON B. KERNE,  
cc: RICHMONDFLYER,  
cc: GRANDEAMP

Admiralty Numbers 1868, 1869, 1870  
ADMIRALTY MATTER

Enclosed herewith are two copies of a self-explanatory memorandum from Acting Assistant Attorney General Joseph D. Quilfoyle dated 2-13-58, requesting reinterviews in instant case at Dallas, Knoxville and Little Rock Offices.

Each office receiving this communication will expedite these interviews in their divisions and submit report to ranch the Bureau on or before 2-28-58. The Houston Office is office of origin and a copy of each report should be designated for USA, Houston.

Enclosures - 2

2 sets: Knoxville (enclosures - 2)  
2 sets: Little Rock (enclosures - 2)  
2 sets: Dallas (131-7) (enclosures - 2)

ECP:eem

*(109)* *W.M.*

*1/18 1/18*

Tolson \_\_\_\_\_  
Nichols \_\_\_\_\_  
Boardman \_\_\_\_\_  
Belmont \_\_\_\_\_  
Mohr \_\_\_\_\_  
Parsons \_\_\_\_\_  
Roselli \_\_\_\_\_  
Tamm \_\_\_\_\_  
Trotter \_\_\_\_\_  
Nease \_\_\_\_\_  
Tele. Room \_\_\_\_\_  
Holloman \_\_\_\_\_  
Gandy \_\_\_\_\_

CCMM - FBI  
131-71600  
MAILER 130

64 FEB 24 1958

*FEB 12*  
*W.M.*

MAIL ROOM

*EW*

# FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Reporting Office <b>SAN ANTONIO</b>	Office of Origin <b>HOUSTON</b>	Date <b>2/17/58</b>	Investigative Period <b>2/13/58</b>
TITLE OF CASE  <b>SS WILSON B. KEENE SS HIGHFLYER SS GRANDCAMP, ETC. ADMIRALTY NUMBERS 1868, 1869, 1870</b>		Report made by <b>CLAY ZACHRY, JR.</b>	Typed By <b>bmb</b>
		CHARACTER OF CASE  <b>ADMIRALTY MATTER</b>	

Synopsis:

*7/7*  
ARTHUR CLARK, Brownsville, Texas, interviewed 2/13/58 and furnished information where known. Mr. CLARK stated that in January 1958 that he was in Houston and talked to an attorney named LONGSCOPE who told him not to give the FBI any information unless they had a court order.

- R U C -

*EX-131*  
*B*  
*20*

Approved <i>2/13/58</i>	Special Agent In Charge	Do not write in spaces below	
Copies made:  2) - Bureau (131-363) — 1 - USA, Houston (27-A12811) — 2 - Houston (131-39) — 1 - San Antonio (131-5) —	<i>131-363-97</i> <i>20 FEB 20 1958</i> <i>(F. B. I.)</i> <i>EX-131</i> <i>ST. SECY. 61</i> <i>ST. SECY. 61</i>		

*1 CCRAB by 0-6 2/20/58*  
*61 FEB 27 1958*  
*ECP/209*

Property of FBI - This report is loaned to you by the FBI, and neither it nor its contents are to be distributed outside the agency to which loaned.

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
INTERVIEW REPORT

DATE: 2/17/58

Mr. CLARK advised that he was in Houston, Texas, sometime in January 1958 and that a lawyer named LEMER, who he thinks represents the French Government, talked to him and told him not to answer any questions that the FBI might ask him unless they had a court order directing that he do it.

CLARK said that prior to the explosion that he knew the commodity was ammonium nitrate fertilizer.

He stated that he does not recall whether or not the French Supply Counsel told him that the commodity was ammonium nitrate but that they sent shipping instructions, the details of which he does not recall without referring to these old records.

CLARK stated that he recalls the Lieutenant J. LEMER, but not the ARGETAN. He does not recall how the bills of lading referred to the commodity, but that the file should show on the ocean bills of lading and in the shipping instructions of the French Supply Counsel.

He does not recall just how Mr. MOUNTFORD at the French Supply Counsel referred to the commodity. He thinks that it was referred to as ammonium nitrate fertilizer or just fertilizer.

CLARK is not sure that he can recall the identity of PETER ALBERT, but thinks that ALBERT was in the New York Office of the French Supply Counsel.

He does not recall whether ALBERT told him that the commodity was ammonium nitrate.

- 2 -

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Interview with ARTHUR CLARK File # MA 131-5

on 2/13/58 at 406 Pan American Building, Brownsville, Texas Dictated on: 2/14/58  
by Special Agent CLAY ZACHRY, JR./bmb

SA 131-5

He further stated that he does not recall, without referring to the correspondence, whether he had ever mailed to the French Supply Counsel or received from them any reference to the commodity as ammonium nitrate.

Mr. CLARK said that so far as he can recall that prior to the explosion that the commodity was not referred to as ammonium nitrate fertilizer followed by brackets with the term "oxidizing material."

- R N C -

## Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : DIRECTOR, FBI (131-363)

DATE: 2/17/58

FROM: SAC, SAN ANTONIO (131-5)

SUBJECT: SS WILSON B. KEENE

SS HIGHFLYER

SS GRANDCAMP, ETC

ADMIRALITY NUMBERS 1868, 1869, 1870

ADMIRALTY MATTER

m2

Enclosed herewith are two copies of the report of SA CLAY ZACHRY, JR., dated 2/17/58 at San Antonio.

ADMINISTRATIVE

During the interview of Mr. ARTHUR CLARK, 406 Pan American Building, Brownsville, Texas, on February 13, 1958, he expressed mild irritation at being asked direct questions on matters without a chance to refer to old files and records to refresh his memory as to certain details.

REFERENCES

Report of SA JOSEPH J. DOOLING (A) at Houston dated 11/2/57.

Airtel from Houston to the Director dated 2/8/58.

② - Bureau (Encls.-2) (131-363)  
 2 - Houston (Encls.-2) (131-39)  
 1 - San Antonio (131-4)

CZ:bmb

(5)

2 ENCLOSURE

EX. - 131

20 FEB 20 1958

01-378  
EX. - 131

SAC

FEB 27 1958  
FBI - SAN ANTONIO  
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION61 FEB 27 1958  
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